



MEDIA RELEASE

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Missouri River Medical Center Joins Benefis Health System

FORT BENTON – The Missouri River Medical Center in Chouteau County is now part of Benefis Health System.

Benefis, which is based in Great Falls, acquired the critical access hospital, rural health clinic, and nursing home on July 1. Benefis has had a management contract with MRMC since 2015 when the rural hospital slipped into the red. President of Community Hospitals Louie King will continue to run the rural hospital, along with Benefis Teton Medical Center in Choteau.

Connecting with Benefis strengthens MRMC, and Fort Benton needs a viable MRMC, King said. The medical center is a source of good jobs in the town of 1,440 and makes it more possible for people to stay in the community as they age. It's important to the health of residents and the safety of travelers. As a critical access hospital, MRMC is always staffed for an emergency.

"The Board of Directors saw that joining Benefis was a much-needed step in providing a collaboration that will enhance our local healthcare services and help sustain healthcare for Fort Benton and Chouteau County in the future," King said. "This move will bring much-needed capital for the completion of the remodeling of our older facility into a state-of-the-art critical access hospital."

The 83 employees at Benefis Missouri River Medical Center will become Benefis employees. Benefis employs more than 3,400 people and has a no-layoff policy, which has been a commitment for two decades and counting. Benefis also employs more than 340 providers. MRMC is Fort Benton's largest employer.

"I would like to thank the Missouri River Medical Center staff and providers for their dedication to providing quality healthcare to our small community over their many years of service," King said. "These are exciting times for Fort Benton and the surrounding communities, and it has been an honor to be a part of this process."

Benefis Health System and MRMC share common roots via the Sisters of Providence. The nuns established St. Clare Hospital, later MRMC, in Fort Benton in 1886. The hospital was transferred to Chouteau County in 1974. The nuns also founded Columbus Hospital in 1892. Columbus merged with Deaconess Hospital to become Benefis Health System in 1996.

With the acquisition, Benefis Health System now operates four campuses in Great Falls (East, Central, West, and Grandview); critical access hospitals in Choteau and Fort Benton; four outpatient healthcare locations in Helena; and outreach offices in additional towns in Montana.