

Argus Courier - New hospital chief ready for challenges

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NEW HOSPITAL CHIEF READY FOR CHALLENGES

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Like many people with a passion for farming, new Petaluma resident Jim Suver is attracted to the area's fertile fields and rich agricultural tradition — but don't expect him to be growing walnuts and kiwis, the longtime family staples, or anything else any time soon.

"Give me about a year, so I can see how I do at my new job," said Suver, laughing.

And considering the challenging nature of his position — vice president of operations and chief administrator of Petaluma Valley Hospital — his approach is perfectly understandable.

On April 18, Suver was selected as the new chief of PVH, replacing interim head Michael Glasberg, the chief operating officer of St. Joseph Health System of Sonoma County. Glasberg stepped in after Wayne Fairchild departed on Oct. 19.

Suver moved to Petaluma, and began serving last week.

"I love the area — it's rural, but it's experiencing a lot of growth," he said. "Several of my peers have had experiences working with the hospital, and told me I'd be going to a great place. Nothing beats serving a local community hospital."



Terry Hankins
Jim Suver, the new vice president of operations and chief administrator of Petaluma Valley Hospital, chats with Nancy Corda, nurse manager of the hospital's Intensive Care Unit, about newly installed electronic cameras.

[Zoom Photo](#)

Suver served as the CEO and administrator of Biggs-Gridley Memorial Hospital in Gridley from 1998 to 2007. The hospital has 49 beds and an operating budget of over \$35 million.

“Compared with that hospital, Petaluma Valley Hospital is much more similar than different. This is a larger facility, so it is a step up for me, but it has a great team of folks that will help me make the transition,” he said.

Suver grew up primarily near Gridley and Live Oak, in the Sacramento area. His father, James, was a professor of health-care administration and his mother, Margaret, was a school administrator. During his formative years, he was heavily influenced by his grandfather, Mark Robinson, a farmer.

“He was a self-made man, and personified all that’s good in a small town and a community,” Suver said.

After graduating from Shasta High School in Redding and receiving a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Chico State University, Suver worked for several companies. He began working as a cost accountant for Georgia Pacific Lumber in Fort Bragg in 1983, started serving as the administrative director of management information systems for Sutter Solano Medical Center in Vallejo in 1986 and worked as the executive director of finance and information technology and then regional director of information technology while serving Catholic Healthcare West in San Francisco from 1995 to 1998.

He received a master’s degree in hospital health administration from the University of Southern California in 1995.

Suver feels that his familiarity with Redwood City’s Sequoia Hospital, owned by San Mateo County but operated by Catholic Healthcare West, will enable him to understand the relationship between PVH, owned by the Petaluma Health Care District but operated by SJHS of Sonoma County.

“They are based on the same model. The days of stand-alone hospitals are over, except in rare situations. In today’s challenging

health-care times, community hospitals need a partner that shares their vision. Petaluma Valley Hospital is an important part of the St. Joseph system, and its integration into it has been very fair,” he said, adding that it is important for PVH to simultaneously maintain its own identity rather than be thought of as merely another floor of Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital.

“Jim has worked with smaller, community-based hospitals that are integrated into a larger system,” added Daymon Doss, CEO of the PHCD. “His experience working with community-based physicians will serve Petaluma Valley Hospital well. We look forward to working with Jim as we address issues of physician recruitment and services, and expansion of programs.”

Suver will face challenges regarding PVH’s financial shortfalls, physician recruitment and retention, continuing technological upgrades and other matters. Many community members have expressed a desire for more specialty services and a larger selection of health insurance plans, and nurses remain concerned about adequate staffing levels.

He recognizes that he often will be the “man in the middle” between people with conflicting interests.

“Sometimes, I’ll need to be a human shock absorber,” he said. “The most important thing is to listen. Often, people have the best interests of everyone in mind, but need to express concerns to each other in different ways.”

Suver intends to build upon Fairchild’s work in establishing strong communications with staff members.

“I have heard that this was one of his strong suits, and I want to continue it. I will make myself accessible, and have an open-door policy,” he said.

He also intends to be highly involved and visible in the community, and it’s been rumored that Suver — an avid swimmer, skier, and horseback rider — can be spotted bicycling to work.

“I live close enough to the hospital to do it, and eventually I’ll get there, but I haven’t yet. George Perez (the CEO of SJHS of Sonoma County) may have started that rumor. Maybe he’s trying to suggest something,” Suver said, smiling.

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