

Merger with AHS Promises New Era of Health Care Excellence, Access

As a veteran health-care administrator, it is extremely gratifying to be a part of the introduction of San Leandro Hospital into Alameda Health System and to imagine the great days ahead both for the institutions and the people they serve.

Just a short time ago, AHS added San Leandro Hospital to its services in central Alameda County, welcoming 450 employees, 100 physicians and 40 auxiliary-volunteer workers to our greatly expanded presence in a community of 176,000. Yes, we're up and running, and it is a privilege for me to lead this phase of excellence in our New Day in Health Care.

Melding AHS service with an existing hospital's strong tradition and reputation creates a significant new access point, launching a synergy in which the sum is greater than the parts.

I'd like to describe some of the synergies that we anticipate as a result of this alliance.

First and foremost, it greatly expands the AHS network of health care facilities, giving our patients a much better range of health care options and better coordinated medical services. This alone enhances our determination to welcome patients as a provider of choice, while continuing to honor our mission of service to all. Patients in the San Leandro area who are now underserved will get the care they need without traveling far from home.

The hardworking Emergency Department, for example, not only remains in place with its case load of 28,000 per year, but is now linked to AHS's top-ranked Highland Hospital Emergency Department.

Another key enhancement is moving AHS's inpatient physical rehabilitation services to San Leandro's upper floors from Fairmont Hospital, which I also lead. It will take some time, but the project will establish San Leandro as an acute rehab facility, while Fairmont will continue the balance of its schedule of services.

The result will be an acute rehabilitation center to treat multiple traumas, brain injuries and strokes. And we're building a comprehensive orthopedics services line that will be a center of excellence the community can take pride in.

We'll also be working hard to bring back community-based physicians and San Leandro-area patients that we currently don't have. From a business standpoint, that's Job One: Recapturing business in the community.

For me, a Bay Area native, undertaking these new objectives presents an unusually fulfilling opportunity. I'm spending a lot of time doing active listening, absorbing in-depth conversations with the medical staff, nursing staff and the people who have worked at San Leandro Hospital for years. I'm sharing with them the vision we have for transforming the hospital into an integral part of AHS, one playing a unique role in serving the needs of this community.

In short, we'll identify the things that are being done right, and do them better. Where we find a need to change, we will take that opportunity, in the spirit of positive steps to progress. Together, we will do whatever is necessary to make San Leandro a welcoming, vital place for folks to use as their entry point to the comprehensive system of care that is Alameda Health System.

In this time of getting acquainted, I have met many longtime employees who have made their careers at San Leandro so much more than a job. We have volunteers who have served the hospital for 30-40 years, clearly demonstrating San Leandro's fundamental and treasured place in the community.

Many people came together to make possible this new chapter in San Leandro Hospital's history: Supervisor Wilma Chan and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, State Senators Ellen Corbett and Loni Hancock and Assemblymembers Rob Bonta and Ellen Buchanan, San Leandro Mayor Stephen Cassidy, San Leandro City Manager Chris Zapata, the San Leandro City Council, Sutter Health, Eden Township Healthcare District, and the California Nurses Association, to name just a few.

It is an honor to work in such company to revitalize this organization. If we can capture the positive energy I have seen in the brief time that I have been there, our success is guaranteed.

Thank you, San Leandro Hospital, and welcome to Alameda Health System.

James E.T. Jackson, MPH Chief Administrative Officer Fairmont and San Leandro Hospitals