

Bellin, Gundersen: Anticipate merger closing Nov. 30, start of operations Dec. 1.

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Bellin Health and Gundersen Health System have announced they plan to begin combined operations on Dec. 1.

Bellin and Gundersen announced June 1 they were deep into discussions of a planned merger of equals to strengthen the personal, local medical care and experience for which they are renowned in their respective communities.

The merger allows the health systems to offer access to more resources and a broader network of services that will improve care for the patients and families they serve.

“Our health systems have been successfully fulfilling our individual missions, but we know we will thrive and best serve our patients and communities by finding partners with shared missions and strategic visions,” said Scott Rathgaber, MD, current Gundersen chief executive officer, and incoming CEO of the merged organizations. “This merger brings transformative opportunities to expand our patient-centered care and community-minded work. Together, we can invest resources wisely and efficiently to improve health and well-being in our communities, especially for marginalized individuals and broadly for everyone in our care.”

The systems’ current headquarters in both Green Bay and La Crosse will remain and have a balanced leadership structure that places each of the two top positions — CEO and board chair — in different regions to ensure shared decision-making and equal representation. In addition to Dr. Rathgaber serving as System CEO, John

Dykema, current Chair of the Bellin Health Board of Directors, will be the Chair of the newly created Board, residing in Northeast Wisconsin. Current Bellin CEO, Chris Woleske, will serve as System Executive Vice President and Regional President of the Bellin Region. Heather Schimmers, current Gundersen Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Operating Officer, will serve as Regional President of the Gundersen Region.

“The most important message we want to share with everyone is this: The people you know and the care and locations you trust are not changing. Coming together will allow Bellin and Gundersen to better serve our patients and communities, preserving and enhancing a legacy of local, personalized care that will endure for decades to come,” Woleske said. “We have found a true partner in Gundersen, and we know we will be stronger together.”

Bellin and Gundersen anticipate closing on the merger Nov. 30 and beginning operations Dec. 1. Representatives from Bellin and Gundersen have been meeting over the past several months to plan for the integration of the two systems. Over time, the systems intend to provide patients access to more resources and a broader network, including top-tier clinical services, shared provider expertise, state-of-the-art technology and digital healthcare tools that bring virtual care options into homes and workplaces.

The Bellin and Gundersen names, logos, locations, people, and the care patients and communities expect will remain the same.