

Greg Was begins CFO duties at hospital

Written by Chris Lee

Greg Was officially began his role as CFO at Melissa Memorial Hospital (MMH) on Monday, June 15.

Originally from Buffalo, N.Y. Was spent most of his life there. He is a certified public accountant and received his undergraduate degree in 1975 from Canisius College in Buffalo and his MBA in 1998 also from Canisius.



Was is a fellow, the highest rank one can achieve, of the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA). While in Buffalo, he was on the Board of Directors and was also selected to be an officer of the Western New York Chapter of HFMA. He became the first president to bring home national awards to the chapter.

Was began his career in public accounting working for a large firm for five years in Buffalo. He then moved to KPMG, a tax, audit and advisory company.

After his time at KPMG, Was began his healthcare career at Blue Cross in 1983 as a medicare auditor. He had served as a volunteer fireman and EMT prior to that and he enjoyed it so the new endeavor was a comfortable fit.

Was had been working at a critical access hospital in Bisbee, Ariz. near the U.S. and Mexico border when he was contacted by a recruiter about the position in Holyoke. Was mentioned working in Bisbee presented many challenges. He said they worked with many UDA's or undocumented aliens.

"We used to see a lot of undocumented aliens in our emergency rooms," Was said.

The move to Holyoke wasn't as big of a shock as one would think coming from Buffalo.

"I like rural America," Was said. "This is an excellent fit. When I chatted with John (Ayoub) I felt a real match."

Was mentioned he has family in rural settings so he has been there before and knows the ropes.

The process of looking for a CFO for the hospital began back in December when the position opened with the resignation of Shelly Larson.

MMH hired a number of recruitment firms to help fill the CFO position at the hospital, according to administrator John Ayoub.

Jim Rush stepped in to help guide the hospital through the interim period. He began in late December and is currently still on board.

Ayoub said he received roughly 15 resumes from well qualified people for the position. With the help of Rush, Ayoub was able to narrow the field to applicants he was interested in. Ayoub said Rush stepped in to help look at the applicants' technical abilities to better narrow down the selection. In the end, Ayoub said he offered the position to a candidate but that person had gone in a different direction.

While Ayoub and the hospital were sourcing candidates, they also had three recruitment firms looking for the next possible replacement.

Ayoub began receiving resumes from the recruitment firms after he had reached the point where he didn't have anyone for the position. In all, he looked at seven or eight different applicants that the firms had provided.

"Greg was head and shoulders above the rest," Ayoub said. "If you look at him on paper, its really amazing all of the things he's accomplished in such a short period of time."

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Ayoub said he was looking for someone who had been in a critical access hospital and worked with rural health clinics. Knowledge of the NexGen electronic medical record that Melissa Memorial Hospital is implementing was another factor.

Some goals for Was are things such as access, physician recruitment and capital growth. He also looks to ensure financial reporting is accurate and timely. Having the hospital build more cash reserves is important to both Was and Ayoub. Making sure there are funds for technology is another goal for Was.

Patient friendly billing is important, Was said. "When a patient receives a bill, if they have questions and they call the hospital they need to receive prompt courteous attention and their concerns need to be addressed."

After Was's short time in the position, Ayoub likes what he has seen.

"I think this first week has been excellent," Was said. "The people that work here really care about the hospital. This is the nicest hospital I've ever worked in."

In his free time, Was is an avid amateur radio operator. He said he has talked all around the world.

"It's sort of my passion," Was said.

He also likes to hunt and enjoys fly fishing. He said he is looking forward to some pheasant hunting and trout fishing as well as getting back into skiing.

His two daughters still reside in New York. Meghan, 23, is attending Trocaire College in Buffalo to become a nurse while Colleen, 21, attends State University of New York at Buffalo and would like to become a neurosurgeon.

"They're good kids," Was said. "They're my best friends."