Merger that includes Bon Secours announces new name, CEO

The Bon Secours Health System and Ohio-based Mercy Health announced July 23 that John M. Starcher Jr. will lead the combined ministries when they merge as Bon Secours Mercy Health in the fall.

"Our new ministry has an exciting future before it," said Starcher, the current CEO and president of Mercy Health, in a news release. "We will expand our services and programs, provide greater access in our markets to help and serve more people. We will be able to do even more for people who are poor, dying or underserved.

"I count myself blessed to be part of Catholic health care, furthering the legacy of the courageous women who began our ministries more than 100 years ago."

In February, the two systems announced a merger that will create the fifth-largest Catholic health system in the nation, with $8 billion in net operating revenue and $293 million in operating income. It will encompass 57,000 employees and more than 2,100 physicians.

Based in Marriottsville, Bon Secours Health sponsors operations in Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Kentucky, Florida and New York. Mercy Health, Ohio's largest health system, serves communities in its home state and neighboring Kentucky. (The Mercy system in Ohio is not affiliated with Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore.)

Due to the systems' strong brand equity and name recognition in their respective regions, according to the news release, facility names, signage, uniforms and badges will retain their original brands.

Rich Statuto, the current president and CEO of Bon Secours Health, will retire in 2019 after a 24-year health care career; he spent 13 years as Bon Secours' leader. For the next year, he will continue his service to Bon Secours Mercy Health as an advisor.

"I am confident in John's ability to lead Bon Secours Mercy Health as we combine our health care ministries to form a new organization," Statuto said of Starcher in the release. "I am fully committed to the success of our newly formed ministry."

Maureen Richmond, a spokesperson for Mercy Health, told the Catholic Review that a decision on a location for the headquarters of the newly formed health system location will be made before the end of the year. As a large ministry with a very large footprint, she said, "we expect we will need operational hubs across the new ministry."

Starcher earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from Bowling Green State University and a doctorate in jurisprudence from the University of Toledo, both in Ohio, where he is licensed to practice law. He was the former president and CEO of Health Management Associates, and previously served as CEO of three of Mercy Health's four divisions.

"John is passionate about simplifying health care and making our ministry a place where patients want to be treated, physicians want to practice and employees want to work," said Sister of Bon Secours Pat Eck, current chairwoman of Bon Secours Ministries. "We are confident that his leadership and vision for the future of Catholic health care will help us fulfill our mission in the communities we serve."

After the merger, Sister Pat will continue as chairwoman of the Public Juridic Person, the new health system's overarching governing agency, which has canonical oversight.

The Bon Secours footprint in the Archdiocese of Baltimore began in the late 1870s, when the Sisters of Bon Secours came here from Paris.

In 1919, they opened Bon Secours Hospital, which continues to serve in West Baltimore, where, according to the earlier Review article, health crises range from gun violence to high rates of diabetes. Its local mission includes several behavioral health facilities, including one at the former St. Martin Catholic Church, which offer education and housing referrals.