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HEALTH CARE

Hospice providers merging

Creates largest organization of its kind in state; no job cuts

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East Hempfield Township-based Hospice & Community Care plans to merge with Hospice of Central Pennsylvania early next year, a move the two organizations say would make them the largest hospice and palliative care provider in the state.

The two nonprofit hospices said benefits to the merger include increased access to talent in hiring and the ability to work with more private insurances and Medicare Advantage plans. They also said the merger will lower costs for purchased services such as pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and equipment and employee benefits, though

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Hospice merger

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Hospice & Community Care President and CEO Steve Knaub said he was unable to give an estimate of the amount expected to be saved at this time.

The two organizations aim

to complete the merger by Jan. 1, 2024. The organizations will each keep their own names but will operate under a parent organization, Knaub and Hospice of Central PA President and CEO Gil Brown said in an inter-

view.

No employees will be laid off or terminated as a result of the merger, according to an FAQ page on the merger. Hospice & Community Care has approximately 375 employees, and Hospice of Central PA has approximately 134 employees.

Together, the two hospices

serve an area that includes Lancaster, York, Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lebanon, Perry and Schuylkill counties, as well as parts of Berks, Chester and Franklin counties.

Knaub said Hospice & Community Care serves around 500 patients a day for hospice care and 50 patients a day for palliative care, which is symptom control and pain relief for people with serious chronic illnesses who aren't necessarily terminally ill. Brown said Hospice of Central PA serves around 200 patients a day for hospice care and 80 patients a day for palliative

care.

Hospice & Community Care has administrative offices in East Hempfield and York townships and operates a 24-bed inpatient and residential facility and a bereavement support center on Old Harrisburg Pike in Rapho Township. Hospice of Central PA has administrative offices in Harrisburg and Pottsville and operates a six-bed hospice house in Harrisburg.

Money raised by each organization will continue to be used to support the patients and families served by that organization, Knaub and Brown said.

"It's important to both of us that our communities know that the money that we do raise will remain in each of our communities that we are serving," Knaub said.

The two hospices raised a combined \$7 million in the past year, and they have a combined operating budget of just over \$60 million, Knaub said.

After the merger, each hospice will also be able to refer patients to the other's facilities.

"We both cover very large territories, and through this affiliation and merger, if we can help patients pair up with the program that is nearest to where they live, we think that the response time will be much better, and we think it will help people to get care that is closer to their home," Brown said.