

Can DCH Reconnect With Local Talent?

The DCH Health System plays a vital role in the Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama economies. However, decisions by DCH in the last decade possibly reduce the overall positive impact the System is having in Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama.

In the last 10 years the DCH Administration has:

1. Contracted the management of Emergency Room Physician services at DCH Regional to an out of state group when a Tuscaloosa ER group had served the System without any financial subsidy for nearly four decades and was supported by most of the Medical Staff at DCH Regional.
2. Contracted the management of Emergency Room Physician services at DCH Northport to an out of state group when a Northport ER group had served the System without any financial subsidy for 29 years and was supported by most of the Medical Staff at DCH Northport.
3. Contracted the management of Intensive Care Physician Services at DCH Regional to an out of state group when a Tuscaloosa group of Intensive Care Physicians had served the System for four decades without a financial subsidy and was supported by most of the Medical Staff at DCH Northport and DCH Regional.
4. Contracted the management of environmental services to an out of state group.
5. Contracted the management of dietary services to an out of state group.
6. Awarded the position of Chief Nursing Officer of the DCH System to an out of state individual when a leading local candidate was a Moundville native, the Chief Nursing Officer at DCH Northport for 7 years, had 30 years of employment with DCH and a Doctoral Nursing Degree.
7. Awarded the position of Chief Operating Officer of the DCH System to an out of state individual when the leading local candidate was a Tuscaloosa native, had been the Administrator of DCH Northport for over 12 years, had more than 19 years of employment with DCH and was overwhelmingly supported by the Medical Staffs at DCH Northport and DCH Regional.

And now, the DCH Administration intends to contract out hospitalist services across both DCH Northport and DCH Regional to one company. The DCH Administration says it does not have any company in mind for the contract and the current local groups may apply. But the last decade raises doubts.

The apparent preference for out of state firms and individuals might not serve the best interests of DCH, Tuscaloosa County or West Alabama. Perhaps it is time for the DCH Board of Directors to reexamine these circumstances. The Board should consider embracing the talented individuals and businesses of Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama when possible. The Board could start by pausing the process to contract with one entity for hospitalist services. Evidence suggests the local talent of the current contract holders at DCH Regional and DCH Northport can meet and exceed the needs of DCH, Tuscaloosa County and West Alabama.