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## Freeman acquires 4 Arkansas hospitals

Completion of deal marks system's first expansion into state

FROM STAFF REPORTS  
news@joplinglobe.com

Freeman Health System on Monday announced the completion of its acquisition of Northwest Health in

Northwest Arkansas following the close of its purchase agreement with a subsidiary of Community Health Systems Inc.

The Northwest Arkansas hospitals will be known as:

- FREEMAN HEALTH SYSTEM-BENTONVILLE MEDICAL CENTER, with 128 beds.
- FREEMAN HEALTH SYSTEM-SPRINGDALE MEDICAL CENTER, 222 beds.
- FREEMAN HEALTH SYSTEM-

WILLOW CREEK MEDICAL CENTER, 64 beds.

- FREEMAN HEALTH SYSTEM-SILOAM SPRINGS MEDICAL CENTER, 73 beds.

The deal also includes associated outpatient centers, physician practices and a workforce of approximately 2,200 employees.

Community Health Systems, of Franklin, Tennessee, announced the deal was valued at about \$110 million

"before certain transaction expenses."

"Welcoming Northwest Health into the Freeman network supports our commitment to long-term growth and enhances our ability to provide compassionate, coordinated care across a broader regional footprint," Matthew Fry, president and CEO of Freeman Health System, said in a statement. "Northwest

Health's hospitals and care teams bring tremendous strength to our organization, and, together, we're elevating care delivery, expanding access to essential services, and investing in the health of the people and communities who rely on us every day."

The acquisition marks Freeman Health System's first expansion into Arkansas and reflects the organi-

zation's "Freeman Forward strategy to increase access to high-quality, community-focused care while advancing clinical collaboration, operational excellence and innovation across the Four-State region."

"As one of the fastest-growing regions in the U.S., Northwest Arkansas sits at the center of

SEE FREEMAN, 2A

# Restoration story



Reena Campbell and her husband, Shane Campbell, say they routinely come to the Cardinal Valley Restoration Area to fish and relax when they are not working.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

### Cardinal Valley documentary premier set for Thursday

BY JOHN HACKER  
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WEBB CITY, Mo. — For decades, the area between Webb City and Oronogo on north Madison Street was a gravel-filled wasteland where locals went to ride dirt bikes and ATVs and endanger their health by breathing in dust contaminated with lead, zinc and other heavy metals left



A great blue heron flies across one of the lakes at the Cardinal Valley Restoration Area on Madison Street between Webb City and Oronogo on Monday.

GLOBE | JOHN HACKER

over by a century of mining. Today, that same area is a little less than 1,000 acres of grassland, wetlands, lakes and

trails called the Cardinal Valley Restoration Area.

It is also the star of a 30-minute documentary titled "Cardinal Valley: A Restoration Story," which premieres at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Route 66 Movie Theater, 24 S. Main St., Webb City. Tickets are \$10 per seat and are on sale at <https://online.cinema360.org/company/994b2d0>.

"This has been quite the adventure, and I appreciate all of you who have kept up with us, supported and encouraged us along the way," said Meredith Ludweg, producer of the documentary, in an email last week. "The screening on June 4th will mark the beginning of

SEE DOCUMENTARY, 2A

## Missouri judge keeps tax change on ballot

Opponents quickly appeal ruling

BY RUDI KELLER  
Missouri Independent

A proposal to replace the state individual income tax with expanded or increased sales taxes will be on the Aug. 4 ballot and voters will see the description written by lawmakers, a Cole County judge ruled Monday afternoon.

The measure, the top legislative priority for Gov. Mike Kehoe, will appear on the ballot as Amendment 5. In his ruling, Circuit Judge Christopher Limbaugh rejected claims from opponents that lawmakers violated limits on constitutional amendments and that it was improper to put it to a vote.

An appeal was quickly filed Monday evening.

Amendment 5 is sure to be one of the most expensive ballot campaigns this summer. It has already drawn nearly \$2 million in donations to promote it from a not-for-profit called Missouri Promise, while two campaigns are organizing against it, one called Missourians for Fair Taxation, led by the Missouri Association of Realtors to organize business opposition, and another called No Everything Tax, which is organizing opposition from the left.

If approved by voters, lawmakers would be directed to establish revenue triggers for reducing the top state income tax rate, which is currently 4.7% for taxable incomes greater than about \$9,200. It would grant lawmakers five years to change what is covered by sales tax or increase the rate to generate revenue to speed the elimination of the income tax.

The revenue triggers are not specified. If no additional transactions become subject to the sales tax, the current rate of 3% would have to increase to as much as 11.5% to replace the money generated by income tax.

In their challenge to Amendment 5, opponents argued it violated the Missouri Constitution's requirements that proposed amendments change only a

SEE RULING, 2A

## Carthage officials confirm closing of park pool

Swimming, wading options offered

BY JOHN HACKER  
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CARTHAGE, Mo. — The city of Carthage confirmed last week that its Municipal Park swimming pool will remain closed this summer because of problems with

pipings and electrical systems.

Officials said in a written release on the city of Carthage website, <https://www.carthagemo.gov>, that they're disappointed but "ensuring the safety of patrons and staff remains the city's highest priority."

"This decision was made following careful evaluation of the pool's current condition with input from Parks

and Recreation staff, Public Works staff, Carthage Water & Electric staff and professionals in the electrical and aquatics industry," the release said. "The electrical panels have deteriorated due to years of exposure to a corrosive environment, and the water pipes have multiple unrepaired leaks that are being assessed along with the facility's electrical issues."

The city said it's working with industry professionals to find the best way to bring the pool up to code and restore safe operations in the future.

As for the summer of 2026, the city said it has worked with the Fair Acres Family Y to find alternative ways for residents to cool off.

The city said the Central Park wading pool for chil-

dren 10 and younger will have longer operational hours.

The pool will be open from noon-6 p.m. daily through Aug. 31.

The wading pool has always been available for no cost, and that will continue this summer.

"Those enjoying the wading pool must be in

SEE POOL, 2A

