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**Two local health systems will merge to form the country’s largest nonprofit, hospice-based integrated network of care, serving people with chronic or advanced illnesses.**

**February 26, 2020** —Empath Health and Stratum Health System announced today that they have entered into formal discussions to merge the two organizations. This action brings together two integrated networks of care that share a commitment to the preservation of their charitable missions of not-for-profit hospice, home care and community-based services. The new organization will care for more than 6,000 people a day.

“This is an exciting and historic day as we move forward, together, to provide trusted, integrated care solutions for those lives for whom we are blessed to care, including the tremendous support we provide to our patients’ families and our communities,” said Empath Health President and CEO Rafael Sciuлло.

“Empath and Stratum both independently operate in good business and financial health, but must plan for the future,” said Stratum President and CEO Jonathan Fleece. “The combined organization will have the scale, breadth and capabilities to compete more effectively as the healthcare marketplace continues to evolve through increased competition. Our services, people and geographic synergies fit well together creating a stronger, more formidable organization for the years to come.”

Empath Health’s integrated care network supports patients with chronic or advanced illness in greater Tampa Bay. Its family of services includes Suncoast Hospice.

Stratum Health System is focused on managing the continuum of care through hospice and home-based care servicing Southwest Florida. Tidewell Hospice is Stratum’s most recognized brand.

Key highlights of the merger include:

- Development of a comprehensive integration plan bringing the two organizations together. The plan will be carefully thought out and evaluated with a full integration date of January 2023.
- Rafael Sciuлло, President and CEO of Empath Health, and Jonathan Fleece, President and CEO of Stratum Health System, will come together and align under the newly formed entity. Sciuлло will serve as the CEO and Fleece will serve as the President of the as yet unnamed new organization.
- Upon reaching the final integration milestone slated for January 2023, Sciuлло has announced his plans for retirement. At that time, Fleece will become the President and CEO of the new organization.
- The first milestone will be the establishment of the Mission Services Organization (MSO), the first team of professionals brought under the new organization. The MSO will provide shared

services across the organization in the most efficient manner and provide a foundation to build integrated care services. This includes, but is not limited to, innovation, technology, finance, human resources, quality and compliance. It is anticipated that the MSO will launch in 2020.

- Empath Health / Suncoast Hospice, Stratum Health System / Tidewell Hospice and all affiliated organizations will continue to operate under those respective names for now.

The merger has no direct impact to patients and their families, volunteers, donors, referral sources or the Boards of Directors of the current organizations at this time.

Together, the new organization will be “United in Care,” providing trusted, integrated care solutions for the lives for which they are blessed to care. This also includes the tremendous support they provide to patients’ families and the communities they serve. Together, they will continue to exemplify what it means to be not-for-profit compassionate care givers demonstrating open minds, brave spirits, pioneering hearts, grateful voices and a healing presence for the work they so passionately love.

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To learn more about the merger announcement, you can view an announcement video [here](#).



**Stratum Health System President and CEO Jonathan Fleece and Empath Health President and CEO Rafael Scullo.**



### **About Empath Health**

Empath Health is a leading Tampa Bay, Florida nonprofit, integrated network of care that provides expert medical, counseling and support services to comfort anyone facing chronic or advanced illness or grief. We began in 1977 as Suncoast Hospice and today, our care teams serve hospice, home health, palliative, veteran and pediatric patients, aging seniors, clients with HIV/AIDS, families and caregivers. We also provide advance directives assistance, HIV/AIDS prevention and education, as well as grief and crisis counseling.

Since 1977, Suncoast Hospice has been honored to be Pinellas County's not-for-profit provider of compassionate hospice care and bereavement support services for patients and families nearing the final stages of life or grieving the deaths of loved ones. As an Empath Health member, we focus on bringing holistic comfort and dignity through our medical and integrative treatment, emotional and spiritual care and palliative and support services. Families and caregivers also are comforted with training, support and healing. Suncoast Hospice is accredited by The Joint Commission.

### **About Stratum Health System**

Founded in 2015, Stratum Health System was created as a not-for-profit integrated health care network to oversee and support the missions of Tidewell Hospice, Approved Home Health, Avidity Home Health, Connexis Medical Services, SCATA Real Estate and Treasures Thrift Shop. Its foundation is based on the strong reputation, financial strength and capacity for growth established by Tidewell Hospice since 1980. Stratum Health System is focused on managing the "continuum of care" of its patients. We combine the exceptional care of hospice, home health and home-based primary care with specialized care management, all with the goal of providing better care to our patients. Stratum is well positioned to preserve and build upon Tidewell Hospice's recognized brand in the community while establishing itself as a leader in providing highly integrated, exceptional health care to our patients—wherever they may live in the communities we serve. Stratum is moving ahead to forge new relationships and develop new care models to integrate the care provided across the continuum.

Celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Tidewell Hospice is an independent, not-for-profit health provider offering a home-centered, comprehensive system of end-of-life and palliative care for people living with advanced illness and their families. Annually, Tidewell provides care for nearly 10,000 patients throughout its four-county service area of Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte and DeSoto counties. Hospice houses and offices are located in Arcadia, Bradenton, Englewood, Lakewood Ranch, Palmetto, Port Charlotte, Sarasota and Venice. As the region's only not-for-profit hospice, Tidewell relies on donor contributions to provide a number of its acclaimed patient and community services. Tidewell is accredited by the Community Health Accreditation Partner (CHAP) with deemed status, signifying excellent care and meeting Medicare's conditions of participation.