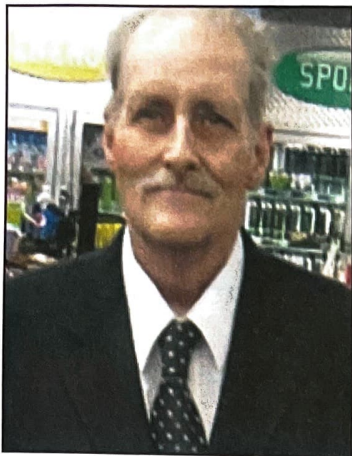


Updates



Alva "Al" Besst was popular in his community and his church.

volunteer with God's Closet, the church's food pantry and clothing supplier.

A member of the community group Bridgeport Alliance, Mr. Besst was active in the effort to restore Chicago Transit Authority bus service to 31st Street. He lived on Hillock Avenue his entire life.

For more information on Mr. Besst, call First Lutheran Church of the Trinity at (312) 842-7390.

—William S. Bike

Potential buyer would keep Mercy open

The community call to keep Mercy Hospital and Medical Center open under new ownership continues, and a potential buyer has stepped forward. Local activists, however, are urging continued community input in deciding the future of Mercy and its mission to serve Chicago's South Side.

In early March, biomedical company Insight, based in Flint, MI, announced it had entered into a non-binding agreement to acquire Mercy Hospital and Medical Center from Mercy Health System of Chicago. Current Mercy Hospital owner Trinity Health last July announced its intention to close the hospital and pivot to an outpatient services model, sparking community activism to keep the hospital open. The State denied

Trinity's request to close the hospital and later denied its application to build an outpatient care center at a location two miles away. Trinity declared bankruptcy for the hospital in February 2021.

"If the acquisition meets State regulatory approval, Insight plans to operate a community-based hospital that will serve patients from Bronzeville, Chicago's South Side, and the City of Chicago," said Jawad Shah, MD, president and CEO of Insight. "In the weeks ahead, we look forward to sharing more about Insight's vision to invest in Chicago and improve community health outcomes. We plan on a hospital that meets the needs of this great community while leveraging regional expertise of our health system. We are committed to a thoughtful community engagement process to ensure access to care for Chicago's diverse populations while achieving financial solvency."

The Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board approved the sale to Insight on March 23.

Sale rather than closure has been the goal of the Chicago Health Equity Coalition (CHEC), formed in May 2020 by the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization and the Lugenia Burns Hope Center and supported by numerous community, labor, healthcare, and faith-based organizations.

"We are pleased that Trinity Health Systems is finally willing to sell to a buyer to keep a full-service hospital at the site," CHEC said in a statement, but also noting that it wanted to be involved in the process. "Nothing about us, without us," the statement said.

"I, along with other elected officials, want to insure" that the purchaser of Mercy "has the best interest of the community in mind," Illinois 5th House District State Representative Lamont J. Robinson Jr. told *Gazette Chicago*. Robinson was an early supporter of keeping the hospital open and asked Gov. JB Pritzker to support a moratorium on any hospital closing in Illinois until the COVID crisis passes.

"This purchase should not be a rushed decision, and it is important that the entire community be involved as this decision will affect them the most," Robinson said.

CHEC has created a list of demands, among them that Mercy continue as a full-service public safety net hospital; provide community transparency and representation and shared governance; and commit to a public plan prior to purchase.

Shaw founded Insight in 2003. It is affiliated with the Insight Institute of Neurosurgery & Neuroscience in Flint, MI, and the Insight Surgical Hospital in Warren, MI. The company operates a biomedical technology campus in Flint, where it provides medical services with multiple specialty services to patients regardless of their ability to pay.

Insight cites its "mission to be the most innovative, ethical, and insightful clinical biomedical technology institution in the world."

In early March, Insight announced its intention to file a Certificate of Exemption application to pursue regulatory approval to complete the Mercy transaction, with a definitive agreement to be reached as soon as possible.

For Insight, log on to iinn.com. To contact Robinson, call (773) 924-4614.

—Monica M. Walk



State Representative Lamont Robinson wants the community involved in Trinity Health's sale of Mercy Hospital and Medical Center.