

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Regional leaders Bhatia, Kunkel, Smedema join New North board of directors

Trio brings strong expertise in critical industries of healthcare, education and energy

NEW NORTH, August 17, 2022 – Regional leaders in the areas of healthcare, education and energy have joined the board of directors of New North Inc., the regional economic development corporation for the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin. Dr. Ashwani Bhatia of BayCare Clinic, Thomas Kunkel of St. Norbert College and Gregory Smedema of We Energies are new members of the board, as advanced by New North’s board development committee and approved by the Board.

“We are pleased to be able to add the expertise of Dr. Bhatia and Greg to the New North board in the important industries of healthcare and energy, respectively,” says Barb LaMue, president and CEO of New North Inc. “We value the regional leadership of St. Norbert, and are happy that Tom has agreed to rejoin our board during the college’s transitional period.”

Dr. Ashwani Bhatia is chief executive officer and chief medical officer for BayCare Clinic, the largest physician-owned specialty-care clinic in Northeast Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. He is responsible for all business and medical aspects of the healthcare organization. Since joining BayCare Clinic, Dr. Bhatia has been an active liaison between the clinic’s leadership and its medical providers, has led successful recruiting efforts for various specialties, and has developed and guided quality metrics to ensure the highest quality of care for BayCare Clinic’s patients. He was instrumental in navigating the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to joining BayCare Clinic in 2019, Dr. Bhatia spent more than a decade-and-a-half with Aurora Health Care and Aurora BayCare Medical Center.

He earned his medical degree from Maulana Azad Medical College in New Delhi, India, and completed internal medicine training at North Middlesex University Trust in London. Dr. Bhatia subsequently performed his internal medicine residency at the Permian Basin campus of Texas Tech University in Odessa, Texas.

Thomas Kunkel is serving as interim president of St. Norbert College during the 2022-23 academic year. He previously was president of the college from 2008 up until his retirement in 2017, a time which saw him oversee numerous academic innovations. These included a partnership with the Medical College of Wisconsin-Green Bay, increased enrollment, improved student and faculty diversity, and fundraising of more than \$150 million, much of which went to new and renovated campus infrastructure.

Kunkel, who was a member of the New North board of directors prior to his retirement, is the author or editor of seven books. He began his professional career as a journalist, working for the *Miami Herald*, *New York Times* and *San Jose Mercury News*, among other publications, before becoming dean of the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland in 2000. Kunkel holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Evansville.

Gregory Smedema is a principal account manager for We Energies, which provides energy services to more than 2.2 million customers in Wisconsin. In his current role since November 2020, he is the initial point of contact for 35 of We Energies’ key commercial and industrial customers, overseeing their needs in the areas of energy efficiency, service, outages and billing. Smedema also works with county and regional business-development agencies, including New North.

He started with We Energies in 2011 as an agricultural account manager, assisting farm customers, before transitioning to an operations supervisor position in 2018. Smedema holds a B.S. degree in agribusiness from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

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New North, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit, regional economic development corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind the 18 counties. The counties include Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee and Waushara. www.thenewnorth.com

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