

## HSP Success Story



### Fit Was Critical For Adventist HealthCare's New CHRO. HealthSearch Partners' Surprising Find Exceeded Their Expectations.

**The Search:** Chief Human Resources Officer

**The Organization:** Adventist HealthCare, Gaithersburg, MD

**Primary Organization Contact:** John Sackett, President, CEO

**Candidate Selected:** Allison Dichoso

#### Challenge

When Gaithersburg, MD-based Adventist HealthCare's (AHC) Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) transitioned to a CEO position with another organization in the Midwest, AHC's CEO, John Sackett, wanted to fill the key executive position quickly, but thoughtfully. Sackett had a checklist of qualifications as he considered potential candidates. Organizational fit was at the top of the list. He knew who he wanted to spearhead the search, his go-to resource for executive search—HealthSearch Partners.

#### Solution

"The community we serve, as well as our employees, are comprised of many cultures. So that informed the search for our new CHRO," Sackett explained. "In fact, these groups speak 80 different languages and come to us with a wide variety of beliefs about health care.

"We hoped we would be able to find someone who was highly qualified, had a broad background in HR issues, and who would help us fill the void left by the departure of a member of our executive team" he said. "We also wanted someone who was familiar with the Seventh-day Adventist Church and who understood our mission. We needed to engage a search firm who had the insight and familiarity with our organization, so that's why I immediately reached out to Ivan at HealthSearch Partners."

"The executives at Adventist HealthCare needed a CHRO who would elevate all employees, physicians and stakeholders," Ivan Bartolome, HealthSearch Partners' President and CEO, said. "As a faith-based, health ministry, AHC also desired an HR executive who would partner closely with each hospital's leaders. Together, they would continue to bolster recruitment of talented people who are great at their jobs and who also strongly resonate with the mission of Adventist HealthCare."

"AHC wasn't looking to disrupt what was working, they were looking to deepen it," Doug Duffield, HSP's Senior Vice President said. "They wanted a CHRO who could honor that momentum by thoughtfully enhancing the system's people strategy. We were encouraged to find someone who could balance deep HR expertise with executive-level judgment, someone capable of navigating both the relational and operational complexities of a mission-driven healthcare system."

#### Results

Allison Dichoso saw the announcement about the CHRO position at AHC. She had begun looking for a new opportunity because she wanted to transition from her decades-long career in public service and politics to focus on a more service-oriented position.

#### Adventist HealthCare Gaithersburg, MD

Adventist HealthCare, based in Gaithersburg, MD, is one of the longest-serving health systems in the Washington, D.C., region and one of the largest employers in Maryland. It includes Shady Grove Medical Center, White Oak Medical Center, Fort Washington Medical Center, Adventist HealthCare Rehabilitation, Home Care Services, Adventist Medical Group and Imaging. Its mission is to extend God's care through the ministry of physical, mental and spiritual healing.

"I was intrigued with the opportunity at AHC because it afforded me the opportunity to continue my work as a public servant, but in a new way and in a new setting," Dichoso said. "While I hadn't worked for an Adventist organization, pursuing the CHRO position at AHC brought me full circle because I was raised Seventh-day Adventist and I attended Adventist schools. The job gave me the chance to serve others in a faith-based mission-focused organization."

So, Dichoso replied to the announcement and Bartolome contacted her. "My experience working with HealthSearch Partners was fantastic," she said. "From my first conversation with Ivan, I knew he had a solid handle on the search. He prepared me well throughout the process. He directed me to areas where I could do my own independent research, and he provided valuable insight HSP had about the position and the organization. He obviously was in tune with AHC because what he communicated to me about them, about the position, and about the expectations for the selected candidate, were reiterated by AHC in the interview process. I'm glad to say I wasn't surprised about anything."

"It was important AHC's next CHRO be able to advance the current Human Resources strategic plan," Bartolome explained. "At the same time, AHC wanted a leader who would add to that strategy in the future. Allison has experience outside of health care that I think will add to the collective strategic thinking. We believe her human resources work in city and federal environments will be a big plus for AHC. We also believe her vivacious approach to Human Resources work will be an added blessing to AHC."

"As the search process unfolded, it became clear what mattered most to AHC was alignment with the spirit of the mission, its emphasis on service, integrity, and community," Duffield explained. "Allison brought a rare combination of legal training, strategic HR leadership, and a demonstrated passion for equity and inclusion. Her ability to connect across sectors, from local government to federal agencies, gave her a broader, more inclusive leadership lens. The AHC team recognized this perspective could help reinforce and expand the organization's mission in fresh, meaningful ways."

Dichoso said the biggest benefit of working with HSP was the personalized interest HSP took in her as a candidate by making sure she understood the culture, the expectations, and the important qualities AHC was looking for in a CHRO. This took the form of many conversations throughout the search.

"The way Ivan and Doug approached working with me saved me time frustration and confusion," Dichoso explained. "Their commitment to continual communication kept me informed and knowledgeable the entire time. I also appreciated their deep insight and understanding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and Adventist HealthCare."

Sackett said he is pleased with the outcome of the search and being able to add Dichoso to the AHC executive team. "She is an attorney and she has spent many years working in HR. Her career includes working for the Federal Reserve and working for two city governments. Being in the Washington, D.C. area, her federal government experience was a plus for AHC. She's doing great and I think she'll be a great addition to my executive team, to the organization, and to the patients we serve."

"As we guided AHC and Allison through the search process it was serious work" Bartolome said. "At the same time, there was also time for some deep reflection, levity and laughter, especially with Allison. We were so pleased to bring her forward in the search process."



## Successful Searches, Satisfied Clients

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**Allison Dichoso**  
**Chief Human Resources Officer**

# When She Threw Her Hat In The Ring For The AVP HR Position, HealthSearch Partners Jumped In To Help.

**The Search:** Assistant Vice President, Human Resources

**The Organization:** Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center, Rockville, MD

**Candidate Selected:** Amy Piersanti

Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center in Rockville, MD, was searching for the ideal candidate to fill the position of Assistant Vice President of Human Resources. As they considered several candidates for the job, the search took on a new wrinkle when an internal candidate threw her hat in the ring.

Amy Piersanti who had served in an HR role at White Oak Medical Center, another Adventist HealthCare affiliate, was contacted by an AHC HR executive about the position at Shady Grove and encouraged to apply. After further discussions, she decided to pursue the Shady Grove opportunity. That's when HealthSearch Partners became aware of Piersanti's interest.

"Shady Grove had an HR Manager position available as well as the AVP position which had not been officially approved," Piersanti explained. "I assumed both roles for a couple of months. When Shady Grove formally began the search for the AVP HR, I applied and went through the interview process along with the other candidates."

Even though Piersanti was an internal candidate, HSP worked with her just like the external candidates. "I had heard great things about HealthSearch Partners," Piersanti recalled. "The initial intake call I had with Ivan and Doug was great," They were phenomenal to work with. We built rapport from the first 'hello.' I was impressed with how they were immediately able to establish a connection with me. The 90-minute call felt like a conversation not a typical interview."

Piersanti said she was impressed with the thorough understanding HSP had of Shady Grove, the role of AVP HR, and the expectations leaders had for the person assuming the role. "I may have had a front row seat because I was internal, but their continual communication and coaching was a big benefit to me. Their connection to the organization and their connection to me as a candidate was phenomenal. I could tell from the very beginning of the search process they had done their homework about Shady Grove and about me."



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**Amy Piersanti**  
**Assistant Vice President**  
**Human Resources**



### Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center, Rockville, MD

Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center in Rockville, MD, is the 266-bed flagship hospital of the Adventist HealthCare system. Opened in 1979, the medical center provides a full range of health services including cardiac and vascular care, oncology, orthopedic, pediatric care and high-risk obstetrical. The Medical Center has more than 2,100 employees, 1,200 medical staff and allied health professionals, and treats more than 108,000 emergency patients and 60,000 inpatients per year.