



**St. Elizabeth's Hospital
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St. Elizabeth's Hospital donates aortic heart valves and Saphenous Vein to Science Departments Departments of Local High Schools

Belleville, IL - St. Elizabeth's Hospital Surgery Department is helping to enhance the science and biology education for local students at Belleville East, Belleville West, Althoff Catholic High School and Governor French Academy by donating aortic heart valves and a saphenous vein to their Biology departments.

The donations of Aortic valves were presented this morning, October 14 at 7:30 a.m. by Linda Mehochko, RN, BSN, Clinical Nurse Educator at St. Elizabeth's Hospital to the following: Mr. Jeff West, Science Dept. Chair from Belleville East, Mr. Joe Lombardi, Science Dept Chair from Belleville West Sara Newton from Althoff Catholic High School (unavailable at time of photo) and the saphenous vein was presented to Mr. Phillip Paeltz, Headmaster, Governor French Academy. Also present at the donation were Mr. David Kniepkamp, Principal, Belleville East High School, Mr. Robert Dahm, Principal, Belleville West High School and Mr. Kevin Shrake, President and CEO, St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

The valves and saphenous vein were from donors to be used in transplants, when

needed. Due to expiration date of the valves and vein and technological advances in heart valve design, Linda Mehochko, RN, of St. Elizabeth's Hospital Surgical Services suggested that the Hospital donate these specimens for use as an educational tool to help students understand the inner working of the human heart and leg vein use in Open Heart Surgery.

"How better to serve our community than to educate our children," Mehochko said. "Rather than discarding the unusable valve, we can use it to help teach and promote healthy lifestyles. The valve, its functions and other information were compiled in a presentation and display for teachers at the local high schools to use as an educational tool."

In the human heart, the aortic valve is found between the left ventricle and the aorta. It has three leaflets that function like a one-way door, allowing blood to flow forward into the aorta, but not backward into the left ventricle.

The aortic valve would be replaced if stenosis, an abnormal narrowing of the valve, occurred in the patient. Causes of aortic stenosis include genetics, diabetes, poor nutrition or a combination of these. Smoking is also related to stenosis. St. Elizabeth's hopes the introduction of this technology in the classroom helps students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle at all ages.

For more information on heart disease and overall heart health, visit steliz.org/services/cardiology. Additional resources/links can also be found on this site.

About St. Elizabeth's Hospital St. Elizabeth's Hospital, in Belleville, IL, maintains a

Gold Seal of approval from the Joint Commission. The hospital was founded by the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis in 1875. Today, we continue their mission: to provide care for the sick and needy with a spirit of respect, care, competence and joy. For more information please contact Kathy Kaiser at 618.234.2120, extension 2946.

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