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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 1, 2009

**AREA SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS TO BENEFIT FROM THE
FIRST ANNUAL “FESTIVAL OF TREES” AT ST. ELIZABETH’S HOSPITAL**

Belleville – St. Elizabeth’s Hospital held a new fundraising event to jumpstart the holiday season by raising money for four community service organizations throughout the metro-east. The “Festival of Trees” was held on December 1, 2009, at the Southern Illinois Heart Institute (SIHI) building on the campus of St. Elizabeth’s Hospital.

Guests joined the seasonal fun and festivities, viewed the decorated trees but also made numerous donations in order to make the holidays a little brighter for local families in need. Donations will be distributed to Catholic Urban Programs to be used for Christmas dinners and holiday needs; Scott Air Force Base to purchase food, toys, gift cards for need military families; the Community Interfaith Food Pantry for food and supplies to serve over 500 families per month; and the Violence Prevention Center for holiday events that will ensure

each child has a good Christmas.

Numerous local businesses have donated food, drinks, and most importantly, a forest of decorated Christmas trees that are on display. The evening will begin with the flip of a switch to light the hospital grounds at 6:15pm. Costumed carolers and Santa arrived in style on a horse-drawn trolley, compliments of Belleville Main Street.

An added bonus to the evening was the unveiling of the *Angel of Hope* sculpture, which will be permanently located in the lobby of the SIHI building.

In early fall, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, through funds from the Friends of St. Elizabeth's Hospital Foundation, commissioned this hand-carved statue by international artist Vasilliki Antonakis. Within 3 months, a 400-pound block of limestone has been meticulously transformed into the *Angel of Hope*.

The *Angel of Hope* design includes an intricate feathered wing pattern on the Angel's back and delicate facial features hand crafted by the artist. Antonakis currently resides in Sparta, Greece, where she is an active sculptor and painter. She has degrees in studio art and art education from the University of Concordia in Montreal, Canada. In addition to numerous solo exhibitions in Greece, Canada, and the United States, she has completed commissions for fountains and paintings in many public spaces in Greece. Recently, she had a solo exhibition of 36 works of art, paintings and sculptures at the Art on the Square Gallery in Belleville.

The decorated Christmas tree forest will be on display through December 25. A special thanks to the area businesses and individuals who donated trees, decorations, food and other items to the "Festival of Trees" program. Tree and decoration donations were made by Artiste De Fleurs, Bank of Belleville, Bank of O'Fallon, Belleville Main Street, Dennis Bielke, Eckert Florists, Grimm and Gorley Florist, Gloria Holland, Krupp Florist, Lindenwood

University, Puckett Park, Angie Psihramis, Kevin and Kathy Shrake, and Steven Mueller Florist. The gazebo in the hospital's Meditation Garden was decorated by Sandy's Backporch. Food donations were provided by The Bee Hollow Market, Hick's Barbeque, Bellecourt Manor, Roy-el Catering, Seven, and The Wine Tap.

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. St. Elizabeth's Hospital provides over \$44 million of uncompensated benefits and services for the poor, elderly, disabled and broader community in general. For more information please contact Kelly Barbeau at 618.234.2120, extension 1270.

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