



Belleville, IL 62220
618/234/2120 Ext. 1357
Fax: 618/222/4748

*From: Craig Steiner
Director of Marketing*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SECOND LARGEST PRIVATE DONATION GIVEN TO ST. ELIZABETH'S HOSPITAL MOVES MAJOR GIFT CAMPAIGN CLOSE TO ITS GOAL

BELLEVILLE, IL, February 8, 2007 -- A donation from late Belleville firefighter Earl L. Ritzheimer's estate to St. Elizabeth's Hospital has enabled St. Elizabeth's to near the goal of its first Major Gifts campaign in more than 50 years. The donation of approximately \$820,000 puts pledges for St. Elizabeth's \$3 million Major Gifts campaign at nearly \$2.4 million, or 80 percent of the goal.

Mr. Ritzheimer served as a firefighter with the City of Belleville for 35 years, retiring in February 1984. While a patient at St. Elizabeth's Hospital several years ago he was moved by the kindness of staff employees who cared for him and helped him. Subsequently he requested in his will that the value of his estate be donated to St. Elizabeth's. He died June 17, 2006 at age 80.

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Approximately \$820,000 has been donated from Mr. Ritzheimer's estate to the hospital, the second largest single donation in the history of St. Elizabeth's Hospital. Mr. Ritzheimer, a lifelong resident of Belleville, was a patient at St. Elizabeth's numerous times between 1990 and 2006. Founded by the Hospital Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, St. Elizabeth's Hospital has cared for the people of southern Illinois since 1875.

"We are overwhelmed by the generosity of Mr. Ritzheimer, and deeply grateful for this wonderful donation," said Tim Brady, administrator of St. Elizabeth's Hospital. "Thanks to the contributions of Mr. Ritzheimer and many others to our Major Gift Campaign, we have been able to purchase the PACS system, which will directly benefit the quality of our patients' care for years to come."

Donations from corporate and individual pledges have helped fund the hospital's new Picture Archival Communications System (PACS), a \$3 million electronic hub that puts all radiology and imaging results at the fingertips of St. Elizabeth's physicians anywhere they log onto a computer, including emergency rooms, operating rooms or their own offices.

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The PACS installation is helping support new digital MRI equipment, four digital radiology rooms, digital mammography and CT scans at the main facility in Belleville and satellite facilities in O'Fallon and Monroe County. The system helps make high quality images immediately available, eliminating waiting times both for physicians and patients. As a result, patients receive quicker diagnoses that can lead to faster treatment.

Converting St. Elizabeth's old analog system to the digital PACS operation has enabled St. Elizabeth's to have digital capabilities on par with, or in most cases better than, any hospital in the St. Louis metropolitan area. St. Elizabeth's Hospital's 220 active physicians admitted more than 14,000 patients in 2006, with more than 44,000 people treated in the emergency room and another 160,000 patients seen on an outpatient basis.

St. Elizabeth's Hospital is a 506-bed acute care medical facility that offers a full range of services with a medical staff representing more than 40 medical specialties and a staff of more than 1,600 employees. It is an affiliate of the Hospital Sisters Health System, a 13-member hospital system based in Springfield, Illinois. For more information, contact 618-234-2120 or www.sebh.org.