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Hospitals Implement Tobacco-Free Policy *Initiative Enhances Safe, Clean and Healthy Hospital Environment*

CRANSTON, R.I. - November 20, 2008 – Hospitals throughout Rhode Island implemented policies today that prohibit the use of tobacco on hospital property. The initiative takes effect on the Great American Smokeout, a national recognition aimed at encouraging Americans to quit smoking.

Nine hospitals (Landmark Medical Center, Memorial Hospital of Rhode Island, The Miriam Hospital, Newport Hospital, Rhode Island Hospital, Roger Williams Medical Center, St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island, South County Hospital and The Westerly Hospital), all members of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island, are participating in the program.

“This policy will further the hospital mission of providing quality health care in a clean, safe and healthy environment,” said Kathleen C. Hittner, MD, chair of the Hospital Association of Rhode Island board of trustees and president and chief executive officer of The Miriam Hospital. “Hospitals are excited to take a leadership role in this important health issue.”

Realizing this policy may cause inconvenience to some, hospitals are offering programs and tools that help tobacco users overcome their addiction. The tobacco-free environment further aides these individuals in their efforts. Those wishing to use tobacco are encouraged to leave hospital property and are asked to avoid loitering or the disposal of materials on public or private property.

“Today marks a day of positive change and heightened awareness for the risks of second-hand smoke,” said Jim Beardsworth, state director of communications, American Cancer Society. “Establishing tobacco-free campuses as we celebrate the Great American Smokeout sends an important message of prevention and education on the risks of tobacco use.”

“I commend all of the hospitals that are leading the way with this important public health policy,” said David R. Gifford, MD, MPH, director, Rhode Island Department of Health. “Hospitals should continue to be models for demonstrating healthy behaviors. This reinforces the fact that smoking is not healthy and there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke.”

The tobacco-free hospital campus initiative was made possible through the support of the American Cancer Society and Jenn Lee Design.

Founded over a half century ago, the Hospital Association of Rhode Island is a statewide organization that assists member hospitals in effectively meeting the health care needs of Rhode Island, through advocacy, representation, education and services. HARI members work collaboratively to improve the quality of care delivered and address issues threatening access to health care including increasing health costs, workforce shortages and decreasing reimbursement. HARI members work together to ensure that all Rhode Islanders will receive comprehensive, high quality health care.

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