St. Mary's Health System in Maine Receives Prestigious $100,000 Foster G. McGaw Prize for Excellence in Community Service

Finalists from Baltimore, Md., Denver and Appleton, Wis., also recognized

CHICAGO, Jan. 13 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- In honor of its broad-based efforts to improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of its community, St. Mary's Health System in Lewiston, Maine, is the recipient of the prestigious 2008 Foster G. McGaw Prize for Excellence in Community Service, one of the most esteemed community service honors in health care.

Each year, this $100,000 prize is presented to a health care organization that provides innovative programs that significantly improve the health and well-being of its community. The Foster G. McGaw Prize is sponsored by the American Hospital Association (AHA), The Baxter International Foundation and the Cardinal Health Foundation.

Named as finalists for this year's award and receiving $10,000 each are Bon Secours Baltimore Health System in Baltimore, Md., Denver Health in Denver and ThedaCare in Appleton, Wis.

"The Foster G. McGaw Prize recognizes health care organizations that serve as role models for improving the health and well-being of the people in their communities. This year's winner and finalists exemplify what it takes to meet the unique needs of the diverse communities they serve," said Susan Manilow, chair of the Foster G. McGaw Prize Committee. "Through strong leadership, innovative collaboration and partnerships, and unwavering commitment, these organizations provide a wide array of programs and services that positively impact people's lives."

This year's McGaw Prize winner, St. Mary's Health System, is a member of Covenant Health Systems based in Lexington, Mass., and provides health care services in central and western Maine from its 16-acre campus in Lewiston. Operating in a federally designated medically underserved area, St. Mary's Health System includes a 233-bed acute care hospital; a rehabilitative care facility; a 128-apartment independent living facility for low-income elderly and disabled community members; residential treatment homes for children and adolescents; and a school for children with emotional disabilities. St. Mary's also offers clinical services with sliding scale fees through a diverse network of 65 physicians, and provides a range of preventive and occupational medical services to more than 400 local employers and their employees.

"Mission is at the heart of everything St. Mary's Health System undertakes," said James Cassidy, president and CEO of St. Mary's. "We are proud of our efforts in the community -- including health screenings, our food pantry, our community gardening program, our housing initiative and our nutrition center. Each of these programs ties back to our mission as a Catholic health system, and support for this mission runs straight through our organization from line staff right up to our board."

Among other programs, St. Mary's was recognized for the following innovative community service initiatives:

-- The Neighborhood Housing Initiative - Recognizing the dire local need for healthy, affordable housing, St. Mary's led the development of a community housing project that has resulted in the construction of 12 affordable new homes for families who would otherwise not have had access to quality housing. In doing so, this initiative also served as a catalyst for housing investments in downtown Lewiston neighborhoods, which were in a severe state of physical and social deterioration.

-- The B Street Health Center - Since 2003, this full-service medical practice, located in the heart of a federally designated enterprise community, offers culturally appropriate, affordable behavioral medicine and dental services on a sliding scale to the area's poor and to its rapidly expanding immigrant community. Each month, the Center provides care to more than 525 patients, many of whom would not otherwise have had affordable access to health care.

-- The St. Mary's Food Pantry - One of the largest emergency food pantries in New England, this food pantry has provided emergency food assistance to local residents for more than 25 years. Operating five days a week, this pantry served more than 17,500 individuals in 2007, more than 10,600 of whom were families. The pantry also educates families on food purchasing, nutritious eating, and cooking.

-- Lots to Gardens - This community- and youth-driven program leverages urban agriculture to teach community members how to grow their own food, provide affordable access to fresh food, live healthier lifestyles and involve youth as leaders. Since its inception in 1999, program participants have built 15 community gardens and green spaces in four diverse Lewiston neighborhoods, growing more than 19,000 pounds of organic produce for low-income community members.
-- Take Charge - Since its inception, this community outreach program has provided more than 6,300 individuals with low-cost health screenings and health care referrals, helping overcome barriers to good health including lack of health insurance, poverty and lack of transportation.

"St. Mary's Health System embraces the vision of its founders to 'do what needs to be done,' whether or not the task is characteristic of a health care system. With a dedication to leveraging financial and human resources to meet community needs in a culturally sensitive manner, St. Mary's addresses a wide range of issues," said Manilow. "Whether creating new, affordable housing, establishing a much needed outreach center for health and community services, addressing the health issues of a growing Somali population or meeting community nutritional needs, St. Mary's provides invaluable social and health care services to its community under outstanding leadership."

2008 Finalists

Three Foster G. McGaw Prize finalists were also recognized for their significant accomplishments in community service. Each received a $10,000 prize:

-- Bon Secours Baltimore Health System in Baltimore, Md., for ensuring access to and delivery of quality health care, life skills education and affordable housing in one of the poorest areas of Baltimore.

-- Denver Health in Denver, for innovative programs to provide its community's most vulnerable populations -- including low-income children, newborns and the uninsured -- with high quality health care.

-- ThedaCare in Appleton, Wis., for establishing a number of collaborative programs that provide both rural farm families and urban underserved populations with improved access to quality health care and for developing health education and prevention programs targeting teens and physically inactive adults and children.

About St. Mary's Health System

The St. Mary's Health System includes St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, a 233-bed acute care facility; Community Clinical Services, with primary care and specialty physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and midwives; St. Mary's d'Youville Pavilion, one of the largest nursing homes north of Boston, with 210 beds dedicated to long-term care, a secure Alzheimer's unit and Rehab Center; St. Mary's Residences, an independent living center; and St. Mary's WorkMed occupational health services, providing comprehensive worksite services to businesses in Androscoggin County and beyond.

About The Foster G. McGaw Prize

The Foster G. McGaw Prize, first awarded in 1986, recognizes health care organizations that demonstrate commitment to community service through a range of programs that demonstrate a passion and continuous commitment to making communities healthier and more vital. The prize inspires hospitals, health systems and communities to assess and implement programs that improve their communities.

The American Hospital Association is a not-for-profit association of health care provider organizations and individuals that are committed to the health improvement of their communities. The AHA is the national advocate for its members, which include almost 5,000 hospitals, health care systems, networks, other providers of care and 37,000 individual members. Founded in 1898, the AHA provides education for health care leaders and is a source of information on health care issues and trends. For more information, visit the AHA Web site at www.aha.org.

The Baxter International Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Baxter International Inc. (NYSE: BAX), helps organizations expand access to health care in the United States and around the world. The foundation, established in 1981, began to focus exclusively on increasing access to health care in 2002 -- particularly for the disadvantaged and underserved -- in communities where Baxter employees live and work. Baxter International Inc. develops, manufactures and markets products that save and sustain the lives of people with hemophilia, immune disorders, infectious diseases, kidney disease, trauma, and other chronic and acute medical conditions. As a global, diversified health care company, Baxter applies a unique combination of expertise in medical devices, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology to create products that advance patient care worldwide. For more information, please visit www.baxter.com.

Supported by the global resources of Cardinal Health and its more than 40,000 employees, the Cardinal Health Foundation supports regional, national and international programs that improve health care quality and build healthy communities. The Cardinal Health Foundation also offers grants to encourage employee service to the community and works through international agencies to donate much-needed medical supplies and funding to those who need them in times of disaster. With annual revenues of $91 billion and operations on five continents, Cardinal Health serves the health care industry with products and services that help hospitals, physician offices and pharmacies reduce costs, improve safety, productivity and profitability,
and deliver better care to patients. To learn more about the Cardinal Health Foundation, visit www.CardinalHealth.com/community.

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