



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Partnership for Hancock Relief moves to next phase *Major retailer offers support to help hospital in need*

CONCORD – Six weeks after New Hampshire hospitals created a hurricane relief fund, they are answering a new call for assistance to help a hospital in Mississippi recover from Hurricane Katrina, thanks in part to collaboration with the world’s largest retailer. In the aftermath of the storm, the New Hampshire Hospital Association identified Hancock Medical Center in Bay St. Louis as a hospital that was hit particularly hard and established the Partnership for Hancock Relief. The money that is raised directly benefits the hospital’s cleanup and rebuilding projects, as well as the hundreds of employees who suffered personal loss in the hurricane.

Now Hancock Medical Center has asked NHHA for equipment and supplies necessary to offer in-patient services as reconstruction continues. The wish list includes large items such as beds, stretchers, x-ray machines, exam tables and a fetal monitor, and smaller items like scales, chairs and blood pressure cuffs.

“Hospitals in New Hampshire are willing to give whatever they can to this cause,” said NHHA president Mike Hill. “We forwarded Hancock’s request to our members, who reviewed their own inventories to determine what they can send to Mississippi.”

The partnership is a way for all of the hospitals in New Hampshire to pool their resources to fulfill Hancock Medical Center’s requests.

“We can’t expect one hospital to donate 12 beds,” said Kathy Bizarro, Executive Vice President of NHHA. “But if four or six of our hospitals each have two or three beds to spare, that takes care of a big basic need for Hancock.”

Once hospitals responded with contributions, the next challenge was determining how to

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transport all of the items to Mississippi. An NHHA staff member keeping track of the donations contacted Wal-Mart's corporate offices for help.

"Wal-Mart did not hesitate to arrange for trucks to pick up the items at every hospital and deliver them to Hancock Medical Center," Bizarro said. "It all came together very quickly, and we're grateful for Wal-Mart's assistance because it saves our hospitals what likely would have been thousands of dollars in shipping costs."

Wal-Mart will send out three trucks to make stops at nine hospitals all over the state on Thursday, November 3: Cheshire Medical Center in Keene, Manchester's Catholic Medical Center and Elliot Hospital, Exeter Hospital, Frisbie Memorial Hospital in Rochester, Littleton Regional Hospital, Monadnock Community Hospital in Peterborough, New London Hospital and Speare Memorial Hospital in Plymouth. The loads from those three trucks will then be loaded onto one larger truck which will begin a 24-hour journey to Hancock Medical Center on Friday morning.

The effects of Hurricane Katrina flooded the entire first floor of Hancock Medical Center. All of the equipment, furnishings and interior structures were destroyed. After weeks of cleanup and reorganization, the emergency department re-opened in October. More equipment will allow the hospital to open additional departments on a limited basis.

With a goal of \$250,000, the Partnership for Hancock Relief so far has collected nearly \$82,000 from hospital fundraisers and individual administrators, physicians, nurses and staff. Several private companies and New Hampshire citizens have also joined the partnership with their own donations.

Those contributions have helped Hancock Medical Center issue a first round of checks to employees for disaster assistance. Each full-time employee received a check for \$200, and each part-time employee received \$100. The hospital plans on giving further financial assistance to their employees soon.

The Partnership for Hancock Relief welcomes cash contributions from any individual, organization or company that wishes to join hospitals in the partnership. Interested donors can download a form from NHHA's Web site, www.nhha.org, or call 225-0900 for more information.

Hospitals in the Granite State have been collaborating in the public interest through the New Hampshire Hospital Association since 1934. Advocacy is the Association's top priority. The Association's mission is to enhance the clinical and economic performance of hospitals, improve public confidence in hospitals, and expand access to coverage and care for the citizens of New Hampshire.

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