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**St. John of God Community Services
Names Samaritan Healthcare & Hospice
Preferred Provider for Palliative & Hospice Care**

Westville, NJ – St. John of God Community Services and Archbishop Damiano School have formally named Samaritan Healthcare & Hospice as the not-for-profit organization’s preferred provider of palliative and hospice care for its medically frail students and clients with special needs.

Samaritan’s preferred provider status formalizes a collaborative pilot program with Archbishop Damiano School at St. John of God Community Services that began in 2012. Samaritan has provided staff training and worked with the school’s staff to consult with students and their families. The goal has been to introduce the concept of palliative care to each family at admission, and routinely add palliative medicine to the multi-disciplinary care team rather than wait until a health crisis develops. The current agreement extends this collaboration to the full spectrum of St. John of God Community Services’ programs and services.

According to the Initiative for Pediatric Palliative Care (www.ippcweb.org), ongoing strides have been made nationally to improve end-of-life care among adults, but there is still much work to do to improve comfort care on behalf of children and their families. Brother Thomas Osorio, OH, St. John of God Community Services’ interim executive director, believes this also applies to adults with developmental disabilities and their families.

Brother Tom hopes this collaboration will serve as a model for other organizations serving people with developmental disabilities. He says, “The heart of our mission is to care for those in need while preserving their dignity and ensuring a quality of life. Our collaboration with Samaritan Healthcare and Hospice allows us to do just that. St. John of God Community Services is founded on the principle of hospitality, which enhances Samaritan’s values. One of our greatest desires is to come to a place where talking about palliative and end-of-life care is no longer an extraordinary conversation.”

Dr. Stephen Goldfine, Samaritan’s Chief Medical Officer, welcomes this ongoing opportunity for earlier conversations with families, faculty, and therapists. “When a child lives with a serious chronic condition, the life of his/her family changes forever. Caring parents need reliable information -- and someone who will take the time to explain it. They want support through difficult decision making. Children and teens need expert relief from the pain and symptoms that can accompany their conditions or the treatments aimed at curing them. Palliative medicine can help. By relieving pain and managing symptoms before a child needs hospice care, we are opening new opportunities of communication with families,” he explains.

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Samaritan President/CEO Mary Ann Boccolini says, "We're proud to have been chosen to share the compassionate benefits of palliative care with the students, clients, and families served by St. John of God Community Services. It's a privilege to support Brother Tom and the life-enhancing work his organization provides. He has long been a proponent of palliative and hospice care within his own monastery, the services he administers, and to other religious orders."

Brother Tom's personal association with Samaritan began in 2007 when his advocacy for timely palliative and hospice care inspired him to serve as a Samaritan patient volunteer, community ambassador, and chair of Samaritan's *Via Lucis* hospice ministry for Catholic patients and families.

About Palliative and Hospice Care:

Palliative derives from the Latin meaning "to comfort." Palliative medicine consultations can be helpful at any stage of serious illness, even while a patient is undergoing curative treatments. Hospice care is the form of palliative care that is effective during the last months of life when the focus shifts from seeking a cure to providing comfort and quality of life.

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About St. John of God Community Services

St. John of God Community Services is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-sectarian organization with a historic world-wide mission to promote the rights of individuals marginalized by society and to create a hospitable space where people may experience dignity, respect, compassion and trust. Our New Jersey location provides multi-dimensional services to individuals and families throughout each stage of life. Our programs include a NJ Department of Education approved private school for students with disabilities, early intervention, inclusive daycare and preschool, adult job training and day services, grant-funded job services for people with barriers to employment, therapeutic recreation and clinic services. Rooted in Mission, we see the whole person and build partnerships in support of each person's goals. For more information, please visit www.sjogcs.org.

About Samaritan Healthcare & Hospice:

Samaritan Healthcare & Hospice is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian, independent organization locally founded in Moorestown, New Jersey in 1980. Samaritan is the regional leader for hospice care, palliative (comfort) medicine, grief support and counseling, end-of-life education, and advocacy. Samaritan serves people in Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties who are coping with the stresses of aging, serious illness or grief in their homes, assisted-living, or nursing home communities and through two inpatient hospice centers: The Samaritan Center at Mt. Holly and The Samaritan Center at Voorhees. Two thrift shops, in Westmont and Pitman, support Samaritan services and programs. Samaritan is accredited by The Joint Commission; a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO); the Home Care & Hospice Association of New Jersey; and is a four-star-level hospice in NHPCO's We Honor Veterans program, created in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Samaritan has been chosen as the Preferred Provider of palliative care for the Kennedy, Lourdes, and Virtua health systems, and St. John of God Community Services. For more information, visit www.SamaritanNJ.org



Photo Caption: Brother Thomas Osorio, OH, St. John of God Community Services' interim executive director (**left**) stands with Samaritan President/CEO Mary Ann Boccolini (**right**).