The Valley Hospital and NJ Sharing Network Unveil Memorial Wall to Honor Organ and Tissue Donors

RIDGEWOOD, NJ – April 29, 2013 – The Valley Hospital, in collaboration with NJ Sharing Network, the non-profit organization responsible for the recovery of organs and tissue for nearly 5,000 New Jerseyans awaiting life-saving transplants, unveiled “A Gift of Life Memorial” April 25 to serve as a tribute to the patients cared for at The Valley Hospital who became organ or tissue donors upon their death. The Memorial is a digital wall display that features photos of organ donors with a statement of tribute provided by their families.

The 90-minute program honoring organ and tissue donors featured Jackie Lue Raia, of Mahwah, whose mother donated three organs following a 2010 car accident. Forty-three others benefitted from her mother’s tissue. Invited guests who attended the unveiling ceremony also heard the personal story of Larry Bologna, from Butler, who received a liver that saved his life.

“Making the decision to be an organ/tissue donor may be easy, but in reality, when the time comes, we know that following through on that decision can be incredibly difficult,” said Peter Diestel, senior vice president of administration and COO of The Valley Hospital. “So tonight, we want to say thank you to all of you. It is your caring and compassion that brings hope to those waiting for an organ.

Morgan Johnson, hospital services manager at NJ Sharing Network, commended health care professionals throughout The Valley Hospital for their hard work and dedication to organ and tissue donation, and thanked donor families for their loved one’s final act of kindness: the gift of life to others.

“Without our hospital partners, without our donor families and without the commitment of so many people we do not exist,” Johnson said. “We are able to continue with our life-saving and life-restoring work because so many people — many of them gathered here today at Valley Hospital — believe and support our mission. These donor memorials will honor the selfless acts of others and give hope to those that continue to wait for the gift of life.”

According to the United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS), more than 115,000 people nationwide are currently on the organ transplant wait list, including nearly 5,000 New Jersey residents. UNOS also estimates that one new name is added to the transplant wait list every 10 minutes.

One organ donor can save up to eight lives. One tissue donor can enhance up 50 lives. Donated corneas can help blind people see again and donated bone can prevent an amputation for a child with bone cancer. Other donated tissue, like skin, can help burn victims and a donated heart valve can save a life.

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Anyone, regardless of age or medical history, can sign up to be a donor. In-person organ donor registration is available at local Motor Vehicle Commission agencies. Visit www.NJSharingNetwork.org to register online.

To learn more about organ and tissue donation or to get involved with NJ Sharing Network call 1-800-742-7365 or visit www.NJSharingNetwork.org to register as an organ and tissue donor.

For more information please about The Valley Hospital, please visit www.ValleyHealth.com.

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**Photo Caption**

Family and friends of organ and tissue donors joined officials from The Valley Hospital and NJ Sharing Network for the unveiling of a new digital donor memorial tribute at the hospital to honor organ and tissue donors. Pictured to the left of one of the digital tributes are family and friends of organ donor James Dallas, formerly of Ridgewood. Pictured on the other side (l-r) are Peter Diestel, senior vice president of administration and COO at The Valley Hospital, Joe Roth, president and CEO, NJ Sharing Network, Scott Pruiksma, a donor family member from Midland Park, and Jayne Press, a donor family member from Waldwick.

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**About NJ Sharing Network**

NJ Sharing Network is a non-profit, federally designated organization responsible for the recovery and placement of donated organs and tissue for New Jersey residents in need of life-saving transplants. NJ Sharing Network partners with Donate Life America, a not-for-profit national alliance that drives communities to increase their numbers of registered donors. NJ Sharing Network honors those who gave, pays tribute to those who received, offers hope to those who continue to wait, and remembers the lives lost while waiting...for the gift of life.

**About The Valley Hospital**

The Valley Hospital, a 451-bed, acute care, not-for-profit hospital located in Ridgewood, NJ, is part of Valley Health System, which also includes Valley Home Care and Valley Medical Group. Valley is an affiliate of NewYork-Presbyterian Healthcare System and the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions. These include 10 consecutive recognitions for service excellence by J.D. Power and Associates for inpatient and emergency department care, and two major awards for patient safety and quality care from the Leapfrog Group, which ranked Valley among the top hospitals in the nation. Valley is ranked No. 1 in NJ by Healthgrades for overall cardiac services, cardiac surgery, and coronary interventional procedures. Valley has also been honored twice with “Magnet” designation – the nursing profession’s highest honor. Key services include cardiology, oncology, women’s and children’s services, emergency care, orthopedics, and neurosciences.