



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Diane Braselton
St. Ann's Community – Rochester
1500 Portland Avenue
Rochester, NY 14621
(585) 697-6406

dbraselton@stannscommunity.com

Volunteers Knit Shawls with Heavenly Whispers to Comfort Those at the End of Life

Irondequoit, NY, April 19, 2010: Approximately 30 volunteers knit prayer shawls for the end-of-life patients who enter the Palliative Center for Caring (PCC) on St. Ann's Irondequoit campus. These shawls are not only knitted with yarn, but they are unique in that they are also made with prayers. As each compassionate volunteer knits, she prays for the recipient of the shawl—that the recipient would feel loved, comforted and be strengthened during such a trying time.

Mary Theisen, a Social Worker at the Palliative Center for Caring, says many patients and family members use the shawls as wraps for warmth and comfort. For others, the shawls are draped across the bed to serve as a prayerful presence. After the patients' deaths, many families treasure the shawls as mementos of the loved ones they lost. "The shawls help families feel connected and close to their loved one. Some of the patients have even been knitters themselves, so that is another reminder. These shawls carry a lot of symbolism."

Most of the knitters/prayer warriors are residents of Chapel Oaks and The Heritage—two St. Ann's communities—or parishioners at St. Thomas the Apostle in Irondequoit. Each year this group knits approximately 250 shawls, as that is the number of patients served at The Palliative Center for Caring annually.

On April 19, 2010, the generous volunteers will gather in the BKA of St. Ann's Home for their annual Prayer Shawl Luncheon. They will bring homemade shawls, and Father Bayer, the priest at St. Ann's Chapel, will bless them. Theisen said the knitters gather together regularly and have formed friendships with one another. "This ministry helps the knitters as well as the recipients."

When the Palliative Center for Caring opened in 2007, Betty Mullin-DiProsa, President and CEO of St. Ann's Community, had the idea of presenting a shawl to each patient. Her church, St. Mary's located downtown, had a prayer shawl ministry, and through the ministry at St. Mary's, Mullin-DiProsa had given shawls to people she knew who were ill or dying. She wanted to extend the same kindness to patients at the Palliative Center for Caring.

Mullin-DiProsa said that the PCC's shawls were originally knitted by volunteers at St. Mary's, but with a grant from Annie's Angels at St. Ann's Community, the soft and delicate yarn was purchased, and the efforts were transferred to volunteers at St. Ann's Community and St. Thomas the Apostle.

"The shawls are a very moving aspect of our ministry, whether the patients are Catholic or not," Mullin-DiProsa said. "Most people come to the Palliative Center for Caring on the last days of their life and the shawls are a token of support for patients and their families. It's a small, but really touching thing we offer as part of our care."

This program has grown out of The Shawl Ministry, a national ministry that began in 1998. Its website is www.shawlministry.com.

The Palliative Center for Caring is a collaborative effort between St. Ann's Community and Visiting Nurse Service of Rochester and Monroe County, Inc.

St. Ann's Community provides a varied range of services and care levels designed to meet the individual needs of older adults. St. Ann's includes two licensed and certified skilled nursing facilities, medical and social adult day programs, independent retirement housing, a transitional care program, assisted living and specialized dementia care, and a geriatric outpatient primary care practice located on two campuses in the Greater Rochester area.

For more information about St. Ann's Community please call 585-697-6000 or visit www.stannscommunity.com. St. Ann's Community is located at 1500 Portland Avenue in Rochester, directly across the street from Rochester General Hospital.

Visiting Nurse Service of Rochester and Monroe County, Inc. (VNS) offers complete home health care services for newborns to seniors, whether acutely ill, temporarily disabled, or requiring long-term care. Founded in 1919 as the first home care agency in Monroe County, VNS has provided quality care for more than 90 years and continues to be the leader in making a smooth transition from hospital to home. With more than 600,000 visits to 11,000 patients annually, VNS staff has the experience to handle all types of medical conditions. As a full service, not-for-profit, Medicare-certified home health agency, VNS provides nursing care, physical, occupational, and speech therapies, home health aide assistance, medical social work, infusion therapy and hospice care. For specialized needs, VNS offers advanced nursing care through premier programs like Long Term Home Health Care, Meals On Wheels, Heart and Lung Care, Cancer Care, and Hospice. All services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information call (585) 787-2233 or visit www.vnsnet.com.

#