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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, please call Kim Deiss, Marketing Coordinator, at 218-454-5807.

**Brainerd Lakes Health announces plans for new
Brainerd Lakes Heart & Vascular Center**

Brainerd Lakes Health (BLH), is collaborating with two other health care organizations to develop a comprehensive cardiovascular program at St. Joseph's Medical Center.

Brainerd Lakes Health, the integrated health care system that encompasses St. Joseph's Medical Center and Brainerd Medical Center is collaborating with CentraCare Health System, based in St. Cloud, and St. Mary's Duluth Clinic Heart Center (SMDC).

As part of this collaboration, Central Minnesota Heart Center cardiologists are now seeing patients at Brainerd Medical Center (BMC) and St. Joseph's Medical Center. Dr. Richard Aplin, MD, FACC, Cardiologist from the Central Minnesota Heart Center, a division of CentraCare Health System, has committed to leading the development of the Brainerd Lakes Heart and Vascular Center and will be residing in our community. In addition, cardiologists Bernard Erickson MD, FACC, FSCAI, Wade Schmidt MD, FACC and Jacob Dutcher, MD, are taking appointments at BMC. Recruiting is ongoing for an additional cardiologist to reside in the Brainerd Lakes area.

The vision for Brainerd Lakes Health is to develop a comprehensive heart and vascular program to serve north central Minnesota that is high quality, outcome driven, patient centered, comprehensive, team based, fiscally responsible and sustainable. The ultimate goal is to provide:

- cardiology services twenty-four hours a day seven days a week;
- non-invasive diagnostic imaging;
- invasive and interventional cardiology, including emergency intervention;
- enhanced inpatient services;
- heart failure management;
- pacemaker clinic.

The center will also provide programming designed to prevent heart problems.

Brainerd Lakes Health has ordered the equipment to create a catheterization lab for performing invasive cardiovascular diagnostics at St. Joseph's Medical Center beginning spring 2009. BLH will build a new cardiovascular wing at St. Joseph's Medical Center to house the Heart and Vascular Center to be completed in spring 2010.

Development of the Heart & Vascular Center is consistent with Brainerd Lakes Health's commitment to improve quality and coordination of care and expand the scope of services available locally.

"Heart problems impact all of us," said Dr. Aplin, Cardiologist. "When they arise, offering quality heart and vascular care in the Brainerd community will save lives."

The demographics of the Brainerd Lakes market and the changing standard of care support the development of this service at this time. Formal relationships with the "gold standard,"

established programs of CentraCare and SMDC will ensure that Brainerd Lakes Health provides exceptional care and achieves stellar clinical outcomes. The Central Minnesota Heart Center and St. Mary's Duluth Clinic Heart Center have received a combined sixteen Top 100 Heart Hospital awards from Thomson Reuters, an independent health care quality monitoring organization.

Brainerd Lakes Health, CentraCare and SMDC have appointed work groups to address governance, staffing, facilities, technology, and marketing of the cardiovascular center. Central Minnesota Heart Center at CentraCare is the clinical partner and St. Mary's Duluth Clinic Heart Center (SMDC) is the managing partner for this effort.

Funding for the program will come from Essentia Health, Brainerd Lakes Health, and a community fundraising effort through the St. Joseph's Foundation. An anonymous gift to the St. Joseph's Foundation of \$1.02 million in July 2004, was matched by St. Joseph's Medical Center for advancing cardiac diagnostic and treatment capabilities at St. Joseph's Medical Center. Brainerd Lakes Health has established a goal to raise a total of \$4 million from a capital campaign in our community to help fund this \$12 million project. To date, the fund has raised \$2.7 million.



Architect's rendering of the Brainerd Lakes Heart & Vascular Center

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