CHI and St. Anthony Hospital Donate and Ship 50 Tons of Equipment to “Sister Hospital” in Hanoi

INGLEWOOD, Colo. – Oct. 9, 2012 – Catholic Health Initiatives and St. Anthony Hospital will donate more than 50 tons of hospital equipment, including about 180 adjustable, hydraulic hospital beds, to Bach Mai Hospital in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The equipment is from St. Anthony Central Hospital in Denver, which closed last year when the new St. Anthony Hospital opened about four miles away in suburban Lakewood.

The humanitarian shipment is to be made on the 40th anniversary of the Vietnam War-era “Christmas Bombings” by the U.S. that accidently struck Bach Mai Hospital, killing patients and staff members with a 500-pound bomb intended for a nearby air strip. A memorial in the hospital’s courtyard honors those who died in the bombing. The shipment also comes at a time when the U.S. and Vietnam are working to improve diplomatic and commercial relations.

The Bach Mai Hospital has been a “sister hospital” to St. Anthony since 2004. Top administrators have promised the used but fully functional equipment to Bach Mai ever since planning began for the replacement facility, which opened in June 2011 in Lakewood. Some of the beds were donated by St. Catherine Hospital in Garden City, KS.

In recent months, Dr. Carl Bartecchi, a Colorado physician who oversees a training program in academic medicine for Vietnamese physicians and nurses at Bach Mai, helped lead a national effort to raise about $300,000 to transport the equipment to Vietnam – including more than $120,000 from doctors who work at St. Anthony Hospital. The equipment, which includes everything from blood pressure cuffs and surgical tools to operating tables and ventilators, also will benefit a second hospital in Hanoi, Viet Duc.

“This is going to mean so much to the patients and the physicians in Hanoi,” said Dr. Bartecchi. “Physicians will have more instruments, more equipment to work with – and patients will have a lot more comfort. Some of these patients are now sleeping two, three to a bed, which consists of little more than a straw mat. This equipment will make a huge difference in the lives of so many individuals.”
Dr. Bartecchi worked with colleagues and foundations from around the country, including the Mayo Clinic and the Michigan State University internal medicine program, to raise funds for the shipment. It will leave Denver by truck later this week for Chicago, and then will be flown aboard a Boeing 747 to Hanoi. The cargo of life-saving equipment – also including two motorcycle ambulances, one donated by the Evergreen Rotary, the other by Denver author Sandra Dallas -- will leave O'Hare International Airport at approximately 7 a.m. on Friday, Oct. 12, for the 18-hour flight to Vietnam’s capital city.

St. Anthony, which is part of Centura Health, a statewide health care system co-sponsored by Englewood-based Catholic Health Initiatives, has a long clinical and charitable affiliation with the 2,000-bed Bach Mai Hospital, a teaching facility for Hanoi Medical University that is so overcrowded that hundreds of patients must share beds. CHI’s Mission and Ministry Fund, which provides millions of dollars for community programs in the U.S. and around the world, has donated more than $650,000 since 2007 to the Bach Mai Hospital Project, a non-profit organization led by Dr. Bartecchi.

A clinical professor of medicine at the University of Colorado and a veteran of the Vietnam War, Dr. Bartecchi teaches at Bach Mai twice a year. Through this program, U.S. physicians train their counterparts at Bach Mai twice each year in critical-care medicine, toxicology, cardiology, pediatrics and emergency medicine; the program also brings Vietnamese physicians to St. Anthony Hospital, the Mayo Clinic and Denver Health each year for training stints ranging from six to 12 months. Those individuals then return to Vietnam to train their colleagues.

A wide assortment of individuals and organizations have made this shipment possible, including an air-freight company, Chapman Freeborn, that offered to reduce the cost of the flight to Noi Bai International Airport outside of Hanoi. Financial assistance included support from the St. Anthony Health Foundation, St. Anthony Hospital, the Mayo Clinic, Michigan State University Medical Center, the McCaw Foundation and many private donors, including members of the American Vietnamese community.

About Catholic Health Initiatives: Catholic Health Initiatives is a national nonprofit health system with headquarters in Englewood, Colo. The faith-based system operates in 19 states and includes 76 hospitals; 40 long-term care, assisted- and residential-living facilities; two community health-services organizations; two accredited nursing colleges; and home health agencies. In fiscal year 2011, CHI provided more than $612 million in charity care and community benefit, including services for the poor, free clinics, education and research. With annual revenues of more than $10.5 billion, CHI is the nation's second-largest Catholic health care system.