

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Children's Hospital Receives IMPACT 100 Grant for Facility Dogs

PENSACOLA, Fla. — More sick and injured children will soon have the comfort of a furry friend during visits to [The Studer Family Children's Hospital at Sacred Heart](#), thanks to a \$100,300 grant from IMPACT 100 Pensacola Bay Area, Inc. Following the success of the Children's Hospital's first facility dog – a two-year-old female golden retriever named Sprout – who arrived in November 2017, Sacred Heart was selected as one of this year's IMPACT 100 recipients for its plan to add four new facility dogs to the Children's Hospital.

"In the past year since adding Sprout to our team, she's made a significant impact in the lives of the children and families we serve, as well as our care team members," said Cat Outzen, director of community relations and children's programs for the Children's Hospital. "We are honored that IMPACT 100 recognized the importance of Sprout to the sick and injured children of the Gulf Coast and the difference we can make by having more facility dogs."

Sprout came to the Children's Hospital from Canine Assistants, a non-profit organization based in Milton, Georgia, that trains and provides service dogs for children and adults with physical disabilities or other special needs. The Children's Hospital plans to work with Canine Assistants again in obtaining the next four facility dogs. Sacred Heart is part of Ascension, the nation's largest, nonprofit health system.

Each facility dog will be accompanied by a handler who will receive specialized training through Canine Assistants.

"Research has shown that dogs can reduce stress and help patients feel better both emotionally and physically," said Julia Humphries, child life specialist and Sprout's primary handler. "One study has even shown that fifteen minutes of working with a dog reduces a child's pain at a level comparable to an adult taking a dose of acetaminophen. In the past year, I've witnessed how Sprout's presence might encourage a child to go for a walk, socialize with others or participate in therapies. Many of our patients have pets at home, so snuggling and petting Sprout can help make a trip to the Children's Hospital far more comfortable."

Sprout currently serves patients and families in the Pediatric Infusion Center, in the outpatient pediatric hematology/oncology office and on the inpatient floors of the Children's Hospital. Handlers of future dogs will be chosen from a pool of internal applicants and – depending on the final selection – could open up facility-dog services to such areas as the Children's Hospital's Autism Center, pediatric rehabilitation office, inpatient units, radiology and diagnostic departments, as well as the medical-observation unit, which will open with the new four-story children's hospital in spring 2019.

Facility dogs like Sprout wear their service-dog vest at all times. They are given regular trips outside and breaks in a quiet space at the Children's Hospital. When not at work, the dogs live like normal pets, relaxing and playing with their handlers at home.

Since 2004, the Pensacola chapter of IMPACT 100 has donated more than \$9 million to charities throughout Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.

The Studer Family Children’s Hospital at Sacred Heart is a 117-bed facility that serves as the only children’s hospital in Northwest Florida. The Children’s Hospital offers a wide range of services to meet all of a child’s medical needs, from a pediatric emergency room and neonatal intensive care unit to a medical staff of more than 120 board-certified doctors across 30 pediatric specialties. The Children’s Hospital provides quality, compassionate care to children, regardless of their parents’ ability to pay. Sacred Heart Health System is a member of Ascension, the largest non-profit health system in the U.S. and the world’s largest Catholic health system. For more information about the services available at The Studer Family Children’s Hospital at Sacred Heart, visit www.sacred-heart.org/childrenshospital.

Photo Captions

IMPACT – Sprout, the Children’s Hospital’s facility dog, accepts a \$100,300 check from IMPACT 100 Pensacola Bay Area, Inc., which will be used to add four new facility dogs to the Children’s Hospital.

IMPACT-Julia-Adrienne-Carol (left-to-right) – Sprout with her handler and Child Life Specialist Julia Humphries, Director of the Sacred Heart Foundation Adrienne Maygarden, and President of the Sacred Heart Foundation Carol Carlan

About Sacred Heart Health System

In Florida, Ascension operates Sacred Heart Health System based in Pensacola and St. Vincent’s HealthCare based in Jacksonville. Together, Ascension operates seven hospitals in Florida and more than 100 other sites of care, and they employ more than 10,000 associates. Across the region, Sacred Heart and St. Vincent’s have served North Florida communities for more than 145 years. In fiscal year 2017, they provided \$168 million in community benefit and care of persons living in poverty. Ascension (www.ascension.org) is a faith-based healthcare organization dedicated to transformation through innovation across the continuum of care. As the largest non-profit health system in the U.S. and the world’s largest Catholic health system, Ascension is committed to delivering compassionate, personalized care to all, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable. Ascension includes approximately 156,000 associates and 34,000 aligned providers. Ascension’s Healthcare Division operates more than 2,600 sites of care – including 151 hospitals and more than 50 senior living facilities – in 21 states and the District of Columbia, while its Solutions Division provides a variety of services and solutions including physician practice management, venture capital investing, investment management, biomedical engineering, facilities management, clinical care management, information services, risk management, and contracting through Ascension’s own group purchasing organization. For more information on Sacred Heart Health System, visit www.sacred-heart.org.

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