Toronto General Hospital
University Health Network

MEDIA RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Project Hope brings the holidays to TGH and other hospital patients

(Toronto, December 22, 2004) -- Every year, Ann Ferron brings a little magic to Toronto General Hospital (TGH), by personally delivering a gift to each patient on Christmas Eve. It's an effort she calls "Project Hope."

"This is about bringing comfort and cheer to someone who is in the hospital, and who may be alone or feeling lonely, especially during the holidays," says Ann. "I want to say to each patient, 'We're here to bring you a little gift and let you know someone is thinking of you. We are bringing you hope'."

This year's Project Hope is the biggest yet. In addition to gift-giving at TGH, friends and family will also bring gifts to all the patients at Toronto East General Hospital, St. Joseph's Health Centre and to patients on three floors of St. Michael's Hospital. Thanks to these combined efforts, Project Hope will reach out to almost 1,000 patients across Toronto this year. Ann's dream is to grow and encourage similar projects in hospitals throughout Toronto and Ontario.

Ann, her husband, two friends and TGH Nurse Manager Linda O'Leary will begin distributing the patient gifts at TGH on Friday December 24, 2004 at 10:00 AM, beginning with the unit where Ann's father died more than 20 years ago. Each patient will receive a small teddy bear, wrapped, and tied by a purple ribbon to signify hope, along with a cheerful message of hope delivered by the volunteers.

Ann began the annual project after her father's death around Christmas, in part to cope with her grief and also to help make the holidays a little brighter for others. Buoyed by the support of her husband, family members and friends, she continues the tradition each year. It is a source of solace to participants and to Ann, whose mother died last year at Christmas time.

Turning grief into comfort, Project Hope is a way of honouring her parents' memory and celebrating the season. "It's the highlight of my Christmas," says Ann. "It is my Christmas." If you would like to learn more about Project Hope, please e-mail your name and contact information to uhn.info@uhn.on.ca, and your e-mail message will be passed on to Ann.

Toronto General Hospital is a partner in University Health Network, along with Toronto Western and Princess Margaret Hospitals. The scope of research and complexity of cases at Toronto General Hospital has made it a national and international source for discovery, education and patient care. It has one of the largest hospital-based research programs in Canada, with major research projects in cardiology, transplantation, surgical innovation, infectious diseases, and genomic medicine. Toronto General Hospital is a teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Toronto.

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