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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Decatur Media Release - April is Child Abuse Prevention Month ***Everyone has a role to play to keep kids safe***

Decatur, Ill. — Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and HSHS St. Mary's Hospital will commemorate the start of April as National Child Abuse Prevention Month at a joint press conference at 10 a.m. on Wednesday April 4 in St. Mary's main lobby, 1800 E. Lake Shore Drive, Decatur. Following the conference there will be a planting of blue pinwheels, one of the national symbols of child abuse prevention.

Several prominent speakers are set to give remarks at the kickoff event. Decatur Mayor Julie Moore-Wolfe will read the governor's proclamation; and DCFS Regional Administrator Cathy Smith, St. Mary's Hospital President and CEO, Joan Coffman, Macon County Court Appointed Special Advocates Executive Director, Steve Miller and Prevent Child Abuse Illinois Executive Director Denise McCaffrey will provide remarks.

"Children are our future and all children deserve great childhoods," said Denise McCaffrey, executive director of Prevent Child Abuse Illinois. "We need to recognize that each one of us has a role to play in preventing child abuse. It's about our future. It's about protecting children."

"At DCFS, we are often 'first responders' when it comes to helping families in crisis, and every day we see some of Illinois' most vulnerable children and their families," said Illinois DCFS Acting Director B.J. Walker. "Working together we can prevent serious harm to the children and reduce trauma that will potentially affect them all of their lives. In particular, we should join together – at the community level – to reach out and touch families who are struggling and do all that we can to support them so they can support their children."

Joan M. Coffman, president and CEO of HSHS St. Mary's Hospital said, "It is our duty to promote better understanding and recognition of signs a child is being abused or neglected. By simply increasing awareness we can help prevent our precious children from being victims in their homes, schools and communities. St. Mary's Hospital is honored to join others in our community and region to stand up against child abuse."

Child Abuse Prevention Month has been observed each April since its first presidential proclamation in 1983. Since that time, millions of Americans have participated in this national campaign. Individuals, organizations and communities across the United States plant pinwheels, tie ribbons, organize trainings, host fundraisers and support a multitude of other activities celebrating healthy, happy childhoods and raising awareness that all children deserve to grow up in nurturing, safe homes. Please join us on April 4 to show your support for all children and their families.

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About HSHS St. Mary's Hospital

Founded in 1878 by three Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, HSHS St. Mary's Hospital is a 244-bed, all private room health care facility that combines modern technology with the caring spirit of the original founders. St. Mary's is situated on an attractive 21-acre campus overlooking Lake Decatur and offers a broad spectrum of comprehensive health services, including the latest diagnostic equipment, interventional cardiology, surgical and medical intervention, emergency medical care, outpatient radiation therapy, pain management and a sleep center. St. Mary's also offers a wide range of community education and wellness programs. The hospital also has both a unique intergenerational day services program and the community's only provider of hospital-based behavioral health services for all ages. Learn more by visiting www.stmarysdecatur.com.

About Hospital Sisters Health System

Hospital Sisters Health System's (HSHS) mission is to reveal and embody Christ's healing love for all people through our high quality Franciscan health care ministry. HSHS provides state-of-the-art health care to our patients and is dedicated to serving all people, especially the most vulnerable, at each of our 15 local systems and physician practices in Illinois (Breese, Decatur, Effingham, Greenville, Highland, Litchfield, O'Fallon, Shelbyville and Springfield) and Wisconsin (Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire, Oconto Falls, Sheboygan and two in Green Bay). HSHS is sponsored by Hospital Sisters Ministries, and Hospital Sisters of St. Francis is the founding institute. For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org. For more information about Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, visit www.hospitalsisters.org.