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Hospital Sisters Health System celebrates 40 years of incorporation

SPRINGFIELD, IL – Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS) is commemorating the 40th anniversary of its incorporation, which took place on December 26, 1978. A celebration was held at the System Services Center in Springfield, Ill. on January 22, 2019 to recognize the vision and leadership of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis and the historic milestone for the system.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, a lot of change confronted Catholic hospitals in the United States. This was particularly the case with the introduction of Medicare and Medicaid in the 1960s, which increased the complexity of running a hospital. Amidst these vast health care changes, the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis knew the creation of HSHS was a fundamental and necessary step to enable their Franciscan health care ministry to survive, grow and thrive. By 1978, many religious congregations that had founded and sponsored hospitals were finding it difficult to keep up with the demands of governance and management, forcing some to close their hospitals. In addition, religious congregations saw a decline in vocations, and the Second Vatican Council elevated the role of laity to prepare them for roles they had already begun to assume in hospital administration.

Under the leadership of Sister Marianna Kosior, OSF, the Provincial Council of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis continued the journey of discernment to create an organization that would oversee the management and operations of the hospitals while keeping the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis at the helm. At the young age of 51, Sister Marianna's vision was that a health system would preserve the ministry. She also saw this as the opportunity to embrace the role of the laity in the Church's work of Catholic health care. Sister Marianna had an unwavering belief that the future of Catholic health care would be built on strong systems and lay leaders.

The first step along the journey was the incorporation in 1973 of Franciscan Administrative Services, Inc., or "FASI." FASI was a consulting office, providing oversight for finance and investments, insurance, major construction projects, and pension programs. However, the hospitals themselves shared no formal connection other than a common board of directors. Sister Marianna and the Provincial Council knew that the hospitals needed more centralized leadership. In 1977, they began to evaluate other alternatives for the sponsorship of their hospitals, a discernment process that would lead to the incorporation of HSHS.

In Catholic health care in the United States, this was a new and untested concept. Only three other religious communities in the U.S. had pursued a similar path. When Sister Marianna was named President of HSHS in 1979, she became one of the first woman CEOs of a corporation with more than two hundred million dollars in assets.

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“We’ve been deliberate about celebrating the 40th anniversary of HSHS, as well as the vision and achievements of the Provincial Superior, the Provincial Council, and the original HSHS board of directors who made the incorporation of HSHS possible, because it is truly remarkable what they established,” said Mary Starmann-Harrison, current HSHS president and CEO. “Their vision, courage and determination to keep their health care ministry alive is inspiring to us all, and they deserve recognition for what they have accomplished. Because of their leadership, HSHS now spans across two states with 15 hospitals, three physician partner groups and serves over two million people every year.”

Sister Marianna believed that the form of the corporation was secondary to its function. In an article she wrote for the Catholic Health Association in 1981, she said that although the congregation had adopted this structure to respond to current management needs, “none should lose sight of the personal interest and dedication that the sisters wish to bring to the care of the sick.” HSHS was created because the sisters wanted to preserve their ministry by sharing their efforts with the laity. Today, the mission of the Hospital Sisters of St. Francis is embodied by over 14,000 lay colleagues of HSHS in Illinois and Wisconsin, who plan to sustain the ministry of HSHS for years to come.

There are five hospitals in the HSHS Southern Illinois Division, in O’Fallon, Effingham, Breese, Greenville and Highland. For more information on your local HSHS Southern Illinois Division hospital, visit the web site of one of these five hospitals below:

- HSHS St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in O’Fallon at steliz.org
- HSHS St. Anthony’s Memorial Hospital in Effingham at stanthonyshospital.org
- HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital in Breese at stjoebreese.com
- HSHS Holy Family Hospital in Greenville at hshsholyfamily.org
- HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital in Highland at stjosephshighland.org

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Photo Caption: This plaque was presented to Sister Marianna Kosior during the 40th anniversary ceremony for her visionary leadership in creating Hospital Sisters Health System. The plaque will hang in her honor at the corporate headquarters for HSHS.

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. For more information about HSHS, visit www.hshs.org. For more information about Hospital Sisters of St. Francis, visit www.hospitalsisters.org.

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