



For Immediate Release

For more information contact:
Kyle Weaver (479) 338-2900

Tough Economy No Match for Mercy Spirit

Mercy Health Foundation of Northwest Arkansas Comes Close to Matching Last Year's Gross Proceeds at the 2009 O'Night Divine Charity Ball

ROGERS, Ark. (December 08, 2009) – It's no secret that tough financial times weigh heavily on charitable causes. However, by the end of the Mercy Health Foundation of Northwest Arkansas' 2009 O' Night Divine Charity Ball, one thing was clear: Mercy spirit trumps the economic climate.

Mercy's 16th annual charity ball was held at the John Q. Hammons Center on Dec. 5, and despite a slightly smaller crowd than 2008 – this year it numbered just shy of 1,000 people – Mercy was still able to come close to matching last year's gross proceeds. Including pledges, donations and money raised throughout the evening, the event grossed \$447,000. Money raised from this event will benefit future projects and fund charity care provided by Mercy Health System of Northwest Arkansas.

"The charitable spirit of Northwest Arkansas matched the passion of the Mercy spirit Saturday night, and it was an incredible experience to witness," said Clark Ellison, Vice President and Chief Development Officer of the Mercy Health Foundation of Northwest Arkansas. "Despite the lean times everyone is experiencing, the need for quality healthcare in our region was paramount in the hearts of our supporters."

The first indication that Mercy's donors and supporters weren't holding onto their money came with the Dickey Ray Club portion of the evening. Dick Trammel asked guests to participate in the "Dickey Ray Club," an effort to raise a set amount of money in a set period of time to be used for a very specific project. This year, Dickey Ray's goal was to raise money for stereotactic breast biopsy equipment to use at the Mercy Breast Center. The equipment costs \$150,000. Before the 15-minute countdown to the fundraiser began, General Mills announced a donation of \$75,000 toward the total, which was followed by the Walmart Foundation's announcement of a \$25,000 gift toward the total. That left \$50,000 for Trammel to raise, and by the end of the time period he brought in \$52,000 – the largest Dickey Ray Club total in the history of the event.

Following this exciting event was the live auction. Helping out auctioneer Richard Clifton of Metropolitan Bank with this portion of the event was former Dallas Cowboys All-Pro Safety Darren Woodson – a guest of Pepsico – who delivered a personally autographed football to the winning bidders. The liveliest moment came during the auction of a VIP trip to California’s wine country in Napa Valley donated by Foster’s Wine Group. That item alone went for \$15,700, and the live auction total of \$57,000 practically equaled 2008’s live auction total.

American Idol Finalist and RCA/19 recording artist Danny Gokey capped the evening with a powerful, heartfelt performance. Gokey previewed a number of songs – including his first single due out Dec. 22 – that will be on his first album with a release date slated for March 2010. He also continued the tradition of singing “O Holy Night” – which carries the refrain of O’ night divine from which the event received its name – as Martina McBride sang in 2008. His most memorable moment though came between songs when he connected with the crowd when he spoke of his personal connection to the importance of charity, as he himself started a charity for children in memory of his wife who passed away just prior to his American Idol audition. It was a touching and endearing moment to be certain.

Top sponsors for the 2009 Charity Ball included:

- Wal-Mart/Sam’s Club
- Lee & Linda Scott
- General Mills
- Don & Jo Soderquist
- White Cloud
- Anheuser-Busch
- Tyson

Mercy Health Foundation of Northwest Arkansas is the fundraising arm of Mercy Health System of Northwest Arkansas, a not-for-profit faith-based health system, provides healthcare services to residents in northwest Arkansas and southwest Missouri. The System includes Mercy Medical Center, Mercy Health Foundation of Northwest Arkansas, The Gardens at Osage Terrace assisted living facility and Mercy medical clinics in 22 locations throughout northwest Arkansas and southwest Missouri.

###