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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Mobile Food Pantry Drives Good Health in Buffalo's Old First Ward**

*Mercy Hospital, Food Bank, and Catholic Charities team up to serve area families*

**Buffalo, NY**— Mercy Hospital, Food Bank of WNY, and Catholic Charities have joined forces on a new “Mobile” Food Pantry at the Mercy Comprehensive Care Center (MCCC) located at 397 Louisiana Street in Buffalo’s Old First Ward. The free service delivers thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables to nearly 500 adults and children on the fourth Wednesday of each month\*. Serving as an offshoot of the nearby Catholic Charities Food Pantry, the Mobile Food Pantry is the first healthcare-based distribution site for the Food Bank in the region.

“We are pleased to be part of this collaborative effort with the Food Bank and Catholic Charities to help create a healthier community,” said Mercy Hospital President & CEO C.J. Urlaub. “Residents have access to healthier foods plus can take advantage of a wide variety of health services and wellness programs offered at the Mercy Comprehensive Care Center.”

“A nutritious diet is critical to maintaining good health and preventing disease,” said Elyse Burgher, Agency & Community Programs Manager for the Food Bank. “Unfortunately, many of our neighbors lack access to the nutritious food they need to lead healthy, active lives. Through this new partnership, we can help ensure nutrient-dense foods, such as fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products, get into the hands and homes of those who need them most.”

In addition to providing staples for healthy meal planning, the Mobile Food Pantry also offers healthy recipe ideas and food tasting, as well as the opportunity to join the MCCC’s free community wellness program *Heart Smart for Life*. As part of the Heart Smart program, participants receive one-on-one nutritional counseling and education, “healthy” cooking classes conducted by a professional nutritionist. The wellness program also offers free health screenings, wellness education and exercise classes, and other resources focused on improving cardiovascular health.

Catholic Charities is also proud to be part of this coalition to help this neighborhood. “This is a great collaboration between the Catholic Health System, Food Bank of WNY and Catholic Charities to be able to provide fresh, healthy food for those in need,” said Bill Larsen, Catholic Charities outreach coordinator. “We’re so happy to be able to serve the community in this unique way.”

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*\*There will be no food distribution in November and December. Regular distribution will resume January 23, 2019.*

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The *Heart Smart for Life* program is a community wellness initiative that launched in January 2017 through support from the Mercy Hospital Foundation and a generous \$165,000 grant from the AstraZeneca Healthcare Foundation, *Connections for Cardiovascular Health*<sup>SM</sup>. Key Bank and Fidelis Care are also partners in this program with a goal to positively impact the health of our community.

For more information about the Mobile Food Pantry or the *Heart Smart for Life* program, call the MCCC at 716-923-6152.

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**About Mercy Hospital:**

Mercy Hospital is home to the Catholic Health Heart Center, providing a full range of cardiac care services including heart surgery and the latest minimally invasive cardiac procedures, and serves as a Joint Commission-accredited Comprehensive Stroke Center with physician experts and capabilities to diagnose and treat the most complex stroke cases. The hospital is also home to the Mercy Emergency Center featuring 32 private treatment rooms and a rooftop heliport, as well as the Family BirthPlace featuring a full spectrum of maternity/child services and a neonatal intensive care unit. Mercy also offers a wide array of outpatient, primary care and rehabilitation services at convenient locations throughout the area, including 24/7 emergency care available at the Mercy Ambulatory Care Center (MACC) in Orchard Park. Founded over 100 years ago by the Sisters of Mercy, the hospital is committed to medical excellence with an ongoing mission to reveal the healing love of Jesus to those in need. For more information, visit [www.chsbuffalo.org](http://www.chsbuffalo.org).

**About the Food Bank of WNY**

The Food Bank of WNY is the primary hunger-relief organization in Western New York, obtaining and distributing food to 317 member agencies, including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, group homes and youth programs in Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara counties. Through these agencies, the Food Bank of WNY serves as many as 140,000 individuals in any given month, including 45,300 households, 54,500 children and infants and 18,370 seniors. For more information, visit [www.foodbankwny.org](http://www.foodbankwny.org).