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**FOR RELEASE:**  
February 16, 2010



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## **Blessing Hospital honored for dedication to saving lives and sight through eye, organ and tissue donation**

QUINCY – In recognition of its exemplary commitment to eye, organ and tissue donation, Blessing Hospital has been named by the Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey as the recipient of its 2010 *Watson Gailey Award*. The award will be presented in a ceremony to take place on March 8.

"Blessing Hospital truly engages the community," says David Hearn, the Eye-Bank's Regional Coordinator. "Blessing's staff understands the importance of donation, and of supporting donor families when a loved one has passed. They help to foster a better understanding of what eye, organ and tissue donation is all about, and that's partly why the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry has continued to grow."

By the beginning of 2010, more than five million Illinois residents had added their names to the Illinois Organ/Tissue Donor Registry.

According to Hearn, Blessing Hospital's commitment and dedication in helping to achieve the mission of sight restoration is evident in many ways. For example, the Eye-Bank depends on the efforts of the hospital's *designated requestors*, staff members who are specially trained to work with donor families as they consider the option of donation. "Designated requestors and trained staff work with us during many different – and sometimes difficult – situations," he explains. "They ensure that donation is discussed with families in a kind and compassionate manner."

Training developed by the Eye-Bank and Gift of Hope, Illinois' Organ Procurement Organization, is provided to all new Blessing staff during their orientation. The hospital also has an active Life Team that meets regularly to discuss any changes in the donation process, and to set goals for increasing awareness of the need for eye, organ and tissue donation. Their efforts contributed to a 41 percent increase in the number of Adams County donations during the past 10 years.

Blessing Hospital, located in Quincy, boasts a medical staff of more than 240 physicians and a team of more than 2,000 employees.

The Watson Gailey Award is presented in honor of the late Dr. Watson Gailey, ophthalmologist and founder of the eye bank established in Bloomington in 1952. The annual award was first given in 1983 – the same year President Ronald Reagan declared March as National Eye Donor Month. It honors individuals and organizations that have shown extraordinary support for the mission of the Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey.

The Illinois Eye-Bank, Watson Gailey in Bloomington is a charitable, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of sight. It recovers, evaluates, and distributes human eye tissue for transplantation. It also supports research into the causes and cures of blinding eye conditions, promotes donation awareness through public and professional education, and provides humanitarian aid to people in need of corneal transplantation throughout the world. For more information, visit [www.illinoiseyebank.org](http://www.illinoiseyebank.org) or call (800) 548-4703.

