**NEWS RELEASE**

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**St. Joseph’s partners with Governor’s Office of Highway Safety to offer youth alcohol/drug education and injury prevention program**

**PHOENIX (March 2020) –** St. Joseph’s Foundation is proud to announce the Governor’s Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) has approved a $11,200 grant to sponsor a diversion program offered at Dignity Health St. Joseph’s Hospital and Medical Center for first-time offenders of underage drinking. The program, named the Trauma Center Wake Up! Youth Program, provides alcohol and drug education and injury-prevention education through a three-way partnership involving Arizona’s judicial system and Department of Public Safety as well as St. Joseph’s Hospital in downtown Phoenix.

This program evolved out of a grave need to address driver behavior-related traffic fatalities on Arizona roadways. According to annual Arizona motor-vehicle crash reports, impairment, speeding, reckless driving and failure to wear a seatbelt are all leading factors in rising traffic deaths. Funding from the GOHS grant will support personnel services and travel-expenses needed to enhance the program.

The program includes two dynamic, eye-opening sessions for first-time underage drinking offenders, referred by the judicial system to register and participate. Session one is led by police officers and trauma experts who provide visual and real-life stories of people who have been killed or severely injured as a result of bad decision-making. The second session takes participants on a social worker-led tour of St. Joseph’s Trauma Center to view incoming traumas and the intensive care unit, where severely injured trauma patients receive lifesaving care. Attendees also participate in a wheelchair exercise to experience the difficulties patients face when accommodating a life-altering disability.

The Trauma Center Wake Up! Youth Program emphasizes the importance of not driving while impaired, consistent seatbelt use, maintaining proper speeds, limiting distractions and setting goals. Upon completion of the program, participants are required to write a reflective essay. The objective of the program and grant is to reduce underage drinking recidivism over the course of one year, comparing data of youth participating in the program with those who have not.

The Governor’s Office of Highway Safety is focused on reducing traffic crashes, deaths injuries and property damage occurring on public roads by developing, promoting and coordinating programs; influencing public and private policy; and increasing public awareness of highway safety.

St. Joseph’s mission is grounded by the guiding principles of its founders, the Sisters of Mercy, who established a commitment to delivering quality care to all patients regardless of ability to pay when they founded the hospital 125 years ago, in 1895. Today, the 593-bed, not-for-profit hospital provides a wide range of health, social and support services, while still remaining fully dedicated to providing special advocacy for the poor and underserved. It is home to the internationally renowned Norton Thoracic Institute and Barrow Neurological Institute, as well as the Center for Women’s Health, UA Cancer Center at St. Joseph’s, a Level 1 Trauma Center and St. Joseph’s Westgate Medical Center. Following in the tradition of its founders, St. Joseph’s Foundation raises funds to support patient care, medical education, community benefit and research at the hospital, ensuring all patients are offered high-quality medical services, provided with kindness, compassion and respect. More info: **SupportStJosephs.org**

**Members of the public are welcome to register for the class by calling St. Joseph’s Trauma Department at 602.406.4220.**

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