Via Christi Health, Mercy Create Joint Venture for Primary Care in Pittsburg, KS

(PITTSBURG, Kansas) April 4, 2016 – Via Christi Health and Mercy today announced a joint venture partnership to create a new primary care physician practice to serve the people of the Pittsburg area. The practice will serve patients in a new clinic facility to be constructed on the Via Christi Hospital campus in Pittsburg, initially employing up to four primary care providers. The partners expect to begin construction of the new clinic in May.

As Catholic health systems with a long history of service in this region, Mercy and Via Christi are ideally suited to partner on improving access to healthcare services for patients in this area. Via Christi, a member of Ascension, the nation's largest Catholic and non-profit health system, is the largest provider of healthcare services in Kansas, with hospitals, clinics and senior living villages in Pittsburg, Wichita, Manhattan and Hays, Kansas. Mercy, with services in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and Oklahoma, has a shared Catholic heritage and a similar integrated continuum of care, including hospitals and physician clinics in nearby Joplin, Missouri, and Fort Scott and Columbus, Kansas.

Market research shows that Pittsburg – like many other rural communities – is underserved by primary care physicians, leading to many Kansans having to travel out of the area to receive basic care. "Working together, we will be able to better meet the challenge of attracting primary care physicians to this community while achieving our shared goals of improved community health and better access to healthcare close to home," said Jeff Korsmo, CEO of Via Christi and Ascension's ministry market leader for Kansas.

"Our vision is to create a regional, clinically integrated system of care that improves access to essential healthcare services and delivers the highest quality of care to residents of southeastern Kansas and the surrounding area," said Dr. Tracy Godfrey, President of Mercy Clinic Joplin.

The Via Christi-Mercy joint venture reflects a national trend of healthcare organizations choosing to partner to improve the coordination and integration of the care they provide to their patients, with a focus on reducing costs where possible.

"Our new partnership with Mercy in Kansas is part of our national strategy in the 24 states with Ascension health ministries to create integrated systems of care to better serve our patients and their families," said Patricia A. Maryland, Dr.PH, President of Healthcare Operations and Chief Operating Officer, Ascension Health, the healthcare delivery subsidiary of Ascension.

Recognizing the challenges of maintaining health services in rural communities, especially in states like Kansas and Missouri that have not expanded Medicaid services, the joint venture offers a unique opportunity to attract and maintain healthcare providers within a strong, clinically integrated system of care.

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About Via Christi Health
Sponsored by Ascension, Via Christi Health (viachristi.org) is the largest provider of healthcare services in Kansas. Via Christi employs approximately 10,000 in its hospitals, senior villages, physician offices and health services. In FY2015, it provided $82.5 million in community benefit to those it serves, including the poor.

About Mercy
Mercy is the seventh largest Catholic health care system in the U.S. and serves millions annually. Mercy includes 45 acute care and specialty (heart, children's, orthopedic and rehab) hospitals, more than 700 physician practices and outpatient facilities, 40,000 co-workers and more than 2,000 Mercy Clinic physicians in Arkansas, Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. Mercy also has outreach ministries in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

About Ascension
Ascension (ascension.org) is a faith-based healthcare organization dedicated to transformation through innovation across the continuum of care. As the largest non-profit health system in the U.S. and the world's largest Catholic health system, Ascension is committed to delivering compassionate, personalized care to all, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable. In FY2015, Ascension provided nearly $2 billion in care of persons living in poverty and other community benefit programs. Approximately 160,000 associates and 36,000 aligned providers serve in 2,000 sites of care — including 137 hospitals and more than 30 senior living facilities — in 24 states and the District of Columbia. In addition to healthcare delivery, Ascension subsidiaries provide a variety of services and solutions including physician practice management, venture capital investing, investment management, biomedical engineering, clinical care management, information services, risk management, and contracting through Ascension's own group purchasing organization.