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French Hospital Medical Center Foundation Receives Grant from Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust to Support Pet Therapy Program
Pet Therapy, or animal assisted therapy, was initiated in 2013 to provide healing value and emotional well-being for patients, visitors and staff

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA – January 16, 2018 – The French Hospital Medical Center (FHMC) Foundation is pleased to announce that they have received a three-year grant from the Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust to further organize and expand the hospital’s Pet Therapy Program.

Animal assisted therapy is a type of therapy that involves animals in the healing process. Studies show that the presence of animals has a positive effect on human physiology and reduces feelings of stress and anxiety. The non-stressful interaction with the pets also improves patients’ interactions with family and staff. Currently, only dogs are included in the program.

Support from the Miossi Charitable Trust will enable FHMC to increase the number of patients who benefit from a therapy animal visit by 10% each year of the grant’s three year funding period. A more structured program would bring together pet therapy volunteers in order to: 1) share best practices, 2) improve training for therapy animals, 3) share experiences with different medical situations, and 4) identify opportunities to expand the program.

“French Hospital is grateful to be the recipient of this generous grant from the Harold J. Miossi Charitable Trust in order to further develop our rewarding Pet Therapy Program,” says Alan Iftiniuk, President & CEO, French Hospital Medical Center. We are continually incorporating therapeutic methods to serve our patients and foster an environment of healing, and this generous funding will assist in that advancement.”

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Blue Distinction Centers (BDC) met overall quality measures for patient safety and outcomes, developed with input from the medical community. A Local Blue Plan may require additional criteria for facilities located in its own service area; for details, contact your Local Blue Plan. Blue Distinction Centers+ (BDC+) also met cost measures that address consumers’ need for affordable healthcare. Each facility’s cost of care is evaluated using data from its Local Blue Plan. Facilities in CA, ID, NY, PA, and WA may lie in two Local Blue Plans’ areas, resulting in two evaluations for cost of care; and their own Local Blue Plans decide whether one or both cost of care evaluation(s) must meet BDC+ national criteria. National criteria for BDC and BDC+ are displayed on www.bcbs.com. Individual outcomes may vary. For details on a provider’s in-network status or your own policy’s coverage, contact your Local Blue Plan and ask your provider before making an appointment. Neither Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association nor any Blue Plans are responsible for non-covered charges or other losses or damages resulting from Blue Distinction or other provider tender information or care received from Blue Distinction or other providers.

The program began in May 2013 and was designed to make a patient's hospital stay more comfortable and to lessen patient anxiety. There are currently fifteen pet therapy volunteers and their animals. Volunteers and their therapy animals visit the hospital most days. Dogs are certified through one of the approved pet therapy agencies and show proof of their vaccinations and training.

Individual bedside visits can be requested by the patient, the patient's doctor, nurse, therapist or a family member. Visits can occur at various times during the weekday, evening, and weekend. Pet therapy volunteers encourage affection with the dogs, as they are for "hugging and petting" and are not considered service dogs.

With the grant, the expansion of the Pet Therapy Program will extend to the FHMC's Hearst Cancer Resource Center. The animals will provide comfort to families facing cancer, as special support is often needed to handle the stress of a cancer diagnosis and treatment. Expansion will consist of the development of a pet therapy support group for families to bring much needed comfort during their cancer journey.

Visits from therapy canines have been well received by patients, family members and visitors, as well as staff. Not only are patients visited in their rooms, but therapy dogs are also in the Main Lobby Waiting area of the hospital, giving support and comfort to French Hospital visitors.

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About French Hospital Medical Center

French Hospital Medical Center, located in San Luis Obispo, California, has been named one of the Nation's 100 Top Hospitals by Truven Health Analytics. French is also a recipient of the Healthgrades Patient Safety Excellence Award and has been in the Top 5% in the Nation for Patient Safety for four consecutive years. French Hospital's Copeland, Forbes, and Rossi Cardiac Care Center provides the latest innovative cardiac and imaging technology and French is the only hospital in SLO County designated to treat STEMI heart attacks. The facility has achieved prestigious designation as a Primary Stroke Center by the Joint Commission for advanced, comprehensive care for stroke patients. The hospital is home to the first-of-its-kind Copeland Health Education Pavilion, providing the most

advanced health care research facilities and educational resources to the community. The Stollmeyer Birthing Center is being expanded and modernized to include additional private birthing rooms, a new family waiting area, an upgraded nursing station, and a new C-section suite. French Hospital's Hearst Cancer Resource Center offers free education, resources, and support to cancer patients and their families. French is a Dignity Health Central Coast hospital which also includes Arroyo Grande Community Hospital in Arroyo Grande, CA, Marian Regional Medical Center in Santa Maria, CA, St. John's Regional Medical Center in Oxnard, CA and St. John's Pleasant Valley in Camarillo, CA. Dignity Health Central Coast is an integrated network of top quality hospitals, physicians from the most prestigious medical schools, and comprehensive outpatient services including primary care offices, premier ambulatory surgery centers, technologically-advanced laboratories and imaging centers and a full service home health agency; all recognized for quality, safety and service. Each hospital is supported by an active philanthropic Foundation to help meet the growing health care needs of our communities. To learn more, visit

<http://www.dignityhealth.org/frenchhospital/>

About the Harold J. Miozzi Charitable Trust

The Harold J. Miozzi Charitable Trust provides assistance to organizations seeking to improve the quality of life for residents of the City and surrounding area of San Luis Obispo, California. This Trust was established under the will of Mr. Harold J. Miozzi, who died on November 8, 2006. The Foundation focuses on six key areas: animal-related, education, environment, the Catholic Church, fine arts and youth development. To learn more, visit

<https://www.miozzicharitabletrust.org/>