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Local Physician and Renowned Neurologist to Receive Prestigious American Heart Association Physician of the Year Award

May 12, 2009 (Edison, NJ) -- Heart disease and stroke have become a global epidemic. According to the American Heart Association, every 25 seconds an American will suffer a coronary event, and every minute someone will die from a heart attack. Every 40 seconds someone has a stroke and every three to four minutes someone dies from one. These statistics are startling. In the United States, coronary heart disease is the primary cause of death while stroke is the number three cause of death and among the leading effects of serious disability. There is need, no doubt, for heightened awareness amongst members of the community to work closely with their physicians to reduce risk factors in the fight against heart disease and stroke.

"We need to educate the public and enhance awareness among those at greatest risk for heart disease and stroke. If we can achieve that, the impact on individual lives and the American population will be tremendous," points out Martin Gizzi, MD, PhD, FAHA, Chairman of the New Jersey Neuroscience Institute (NJNI) at JFK Medical Center, and Professor and Chairman of Neuroscience at Seton Hall University School of Health and Medical Sciences. Dr. Gizzi, board certified in neurology and vascular neurology, has been a leader in the field of neurosciences. Hailed for his extensive research and contributions in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of stroke and other neurological disorders for the past 20 years, Dr. Gizzi was honored with the prestigious 2009 American Heart Association Physician of the Year Award at its 12th annual *Affair of the Heart Ball* on Saturday, May 9, 2009.

The award is conferred annually upon the practicing physician who has rendered "outstanding contributions" toward accomplishing the American Heart Association mission -- *Building healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke*. Dr. Gizzi was honored as a pioneer and leader in numerous initiatives to improve the health of his community, especially in the area of stroke," notes Scott Gebhard, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, JFK Medical Center. True to the AHA mission, Dr. Gizzi and the team at the NJNI have led numerous studies in the prevention and treatment of stroke and were one of the first in the region to use tPA (plasminogen activator) to reverse the effects of acute stroke. TPA, now widely accepted, can help patients have a 30 percent greater chance of recovery without deficit or with minimal deficit, compared to those who do not receive treatment. Furthermore, the NJNI efforts have led to research projects from the laboratory to the bedside, and the training of new physicians in the field of stroke. "Currently, we are testing new methods of treating and preventing strokes using surgical or interventional radiological approaches," Dr. Gizzi says of the NJNI's efforts.

The New Jersey Neuroscience Institute at JFK Medical Center is recognized as a leader in stroke treatment. Under Dr. Gizzi's direction, the NJNI has evolved into a premiere site, ranking among the top 5% of Stroke Centers in the United States and garnering a five star rating from HealthGrades, the nation's leading independent healthcare quality company. Also, it was the first in central New Jersey to become designated by the state of New Jersey as a Comprehensive Stroke Center, and certified by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Mounting research indicates that stroke victims receive better treatment and recover with fewer disabilities at such hospitals. "Such achievements signify that the services provided have the critical elements to achieve long-term success in improving patient outcomes -- a key element to the long-term goals of the AHA," Dr. Gizzi continues.

Dr. Gizzi and his team continue to find ways to garner the support needed to fight the nation's number three killer. A staunch advocate for increased funding for heart disease and stroke research and prevention, Dr. Gizzi

serves as Chairman of the Stroke Advisory Panel, NJ Department of Health & Senior Services, and is an active member of the Stroke Steering Committee for The National Quality Forum in Washington, DC.

“His dedication to patients is deeply known and felt by all who work alongside him,” adds Gebhard. A testament to this commitment, Dr. Gizzi has been named one of America’s Top Doctors since 2002, as published by Castle Connolly, and has also been named among New York Magazine’s Best Doctors in the New York Area and New Jersey Magazine’s Top Doctors in New Jersey.

The *Affair of the Heart Ball* took place on Saturday, May 9, 2009 at the Hanover Marriott in Whippany, New Jersey, serves as a rallying cry for the health of New Jersey and the country’s children while assisting the American Heart Association in leading the way in efforts to safeguard cardiovascular health. The American Heart Association is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to reduce the death rate from coronary heart disease and stroke by 25 percent; and, provide public health leadership to improve cardiovascular health for all, reduce the burden, and eliminate disparities associated with heart disease and stroke. For more information about the *Affair of the Heart Ball*, call 609.208.0020 or visit www.heart.org/NorthernNJHeartBall.

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JFK Medical Center, an affiliate of Solaris Health System, is a 535-bed full-service, acute care hospital, consisting of The Anthony M. Yelencs Community Hospital and the adjacent JFK Johnson Rehabilitative Institute. Located in the heart of Edison, NJ, it has remained at the forefront of quality care in the region since its inception in 1967. Today, JFK accommodates more than 20,000 admissions, 3,000 births and 50,000 Emergency Room visits on a yearly basis. The Medical Center features a complete array of services, including general surgery, emergency medicine, mental health, orthopedics, maternity and pediatric care. It is home to the New Jersey Neuroscience Institute, Regional Cancer Center, Haven Hospice, JFK Imaging Center and the JFK Family Practice Center. Affiliated with UMDNJ -Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and Seton Hall University School of Graduate Medical Education, JFK offers residency programs in physical and rehabilitation medicine, family practice and dentistry