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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Gift of Life” Celebrates National Volunteer Appreciation Week

The week of April 23rd is **National Volunteer Appreciation Week**, and the **Julie Rogers “Gift of Life” Program** is celebrating with a party on **Thursday, April 27, 6:00 p.m.**, at the **Art Museum of Southeast Texas**, where more than 160 volunteers (including over 60 medical professionals), board members, and media representatives will be recognized for exceptional service during 2005.

More than 200 guests are expected to attend the party and enjoy the reception and dinner, partially underwritten by **Glazer’s Distributors**, **Outback Steakhouse**, and **Rao’s Bakery**. Guests will be entertained by local, talented vocalist **Cheryl Guidry** and musician **Chuck Isles**. Volunteers will also take home special mementos.

The “Gift of Life” has more than **500** volunteers and board members who contribute time and resources to the program. Despite having to cancel all of the organization’s activities last fall after Hurricane Rita hit our area, volunteers still contributed over **1,200** hours of volunteer service during 2005.

“Gift of Life” Chair **Regina Rogers** stated, “Volunteers are such an important part of our efforts, and we could not accomplish what we do without them. When one considers the number of volunteer hours contributed to the program last year, it would be equivalent to more than \$22,000 in staff costs. Volunteers are the lifeline to nonprofit organizations, and we are so proud of ours.”

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As **one of the largest cancer screening initiatives of its type in the state**, the “Gift of Life” serves more than **5,000** recipients annually. Several thousand individuals are provided cancer awareness education and information at over **50** outreach programs and area health fairs; more than **750** medically underserved women receive free mammograms at Memorial Hermann Baptist Hospitals in Beaumont and Orange; an additional **750** women are provided free mammograms and clinical breast exams on the UTMB mobile van at strategic locations throughout Southeast Texas twenty times each year; and approximately **450** free prostate cancer screenings are conducted annually. Also, the “Gift of Life” minivan is available for clients who require transportation to and from the program's cancer screening tests and exams. UTMB-Galveston provides follow-up care for individuals who need additional testing and treatment following their screenings.

A cooperative effort of Memorial Hermann Baptist Hospitals, the Julie & Ben Rogers Cancer Institute, the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) at Galveston and its local clinics, the UTMB Cancer Stop Program, The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, and local physicians, the “Gift of Life” has funded over **10,600** free mammograms and more than **3,600** free prostate cancer screenings, and has conducted nearly **350** Sidney “Chief” Dauphin educational outreach programs since its inception.