



OPERATION SAFETY NET

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**PITTSBURGH MERCY HEALTH SYSTEM'S OPERATION SAFETY NET® PARTNERS WITH OTHERS
TO PRESENT 2009 INTERNATIONAL STREET MEDICINE SYMPOSIUM NOV. 3-6 IN ATLANTA**

Homeless providers from around the world to share best practices at fifth annual symposium

PITTSBURGH — Operation Safety Net®, a legacy program of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System, along with Mercy Care Services, a program of Saint Joseph's Health System in Atlanta, Ga., and Mary Hall Freedom House are hosting the **2009 International Street Medicine Symposium, Nov. 3-6, 2009**, at the Georgian Terrace Hotel in Atlanta.

The International Street Medicine Symposium debuted in Pittsburgh five years ago. The annual educational event was established by Dr. Jim Withers, founder and medical director and Linda Sheets, program director of Operation Safety Net®, a medical outreach program for the unsheltered homeless, as a means for physicians, administrative leaders, and others who care for those living on the streets throughout the world, to share best practices in the emerging field of street medicine.

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More than 125 individuals with an interest in street medicine and providing health care services for the homeless, including physicians and other health care professionals, community leaders, and students, are expected to attend.

Dr. H. Westley Clark, Director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, will provide the opening remarks on Thursday, November 5. Dr. Clark leads the agency's efforts to provide effective and accessible treatment to all Americans with addictive disorders.

Other featured presentations will include reducing the cost of homelessness, fostering culturally sensitive health care, establishing human rights for basic needs, and street medicine programs and practices in other United States cities, such as Boston, Chicago, Honolulu, and Nashville; and other cities around the world, including Calcutta, India; Copenhagen, Denmark; Lima and Mala, Peru; London, England; and Santiago, Chile.

The symposium is sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline, Saint Joseph's Mercy Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Atlanta-based St. Joseph Mercy Care Services and the Mary Hall Freedom House will provide sites for participants to learn firsthand how health and support services are delivered in a non-traditional environment.

Continuing education credits will be provided to physicians, nurses and social workers who attend.

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Thanks to the generous support of the symposium's sponsors, there is no charge for participants to attend the symposium. The hotel will provide registered participants with a discounted room rate.

For more information or to register, contact Linda Sheets at 412-232-7224 or

Lsheets@mercy.pmhs.org. Additional information is also available at www.streetmedicine.org.

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About Operation Safety Net ®

Operation Safety Net ® (OSN) is a health, housing, and supportive service to the street homeless population of Pittsburgh and surrounding communities. OSN was established in 1992 by Dr. Jim Withers. The program is a legacy ministry of the Pittsburgh Mercy Health System, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy. OSN's mission is to provide direct care to and to advocate for individuals living on the streets, as well as to provide pathways to healthier lives. OSN treats individuals who are homeless and living on the streets in their own environment. Services are provided by walking teams of clinicians, social workers and outreach members, and via a mobile medical van. In addition, case managers assist clients with benefits, housing, and treatment. OSN is also the leading provider for the Allegheny Engagement Network and the Allegheny County Severe Weather Emergency Shelter. For more information, visit <http://www.pmhs.org/operation-safety-net/>.

About Pittsburgh Mercy Health System

Pittsburgh Mercy Health System is an extension of the Catholic ministry to all people in southwestern Pennsylvania. A member of Catholic Health East and sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy, PMHS focuses on providing quality services that meet physical, mental and spiritual needs. Ministries include Mercy Behavioral Health, A Child's Place at Mercy, Mercy Parish Nurse and Health Ministry Program, Operation Safety Net ®, St. Pius X Personal Care Home, Mercy Foundation, and McAuley Ministries. For more information, visit www.pmhs.org.

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About Saint Joseph’s Mercy Care Services, Inc.

Saint Joseph’s Mercy Care Services has been “taking health care to the streets” since 1985. Located in the heart of downtown Atlanta, Mercy Care Services offers health care and health related services to some of the city’s most needy citizens—new immigrants, homeless person, the uninsured and underinsured. Sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy and Saint Joseph’s Health System, Mercy Care Services delivered care to more than 9,900 patients in its medical and dental programs in 2008. For more information, visit http://www.stjosephsatlanta.org/mercy_care_services/.

About Mary Hall Freedom House

Founded in 1996, Mary Hall Freedom House is a comprehensive residential recovery program for women and women with children. It is designed to offer individualized services to empower women and provide them with the tools and resources necessary to break the cycle of addiction and live drug free. For more information, visit www.maryhallfreedomhouse.org