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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Comfort Rooms Offer New Treatment Options in Behavioral Health:  
SJM Foundation Provides Support for Enhanced Patient Care**

**March 22, 2011...Hornell, NY...** With the help of the St. James Mercy Foundation, St. James Mercy Hospital is taking a step forward in enhancing inpatient behavioral health services.

The Foundation Board of Directors recently approved a gift of \$11,000 to the hospital for outfitting three “comfort rooms”, one in the adolescent psychiatric care unit and two in the adult unit. The new treatment space in the adolescent unit opened in early March, and the new adult facilities will come online at the end of the year, as part of renovations currently underway.

“SJM Hospital is always seeking ways to improve the quality of patient outcomes,” said Mary LaRowe, President and CEO. “As one of the only providers of inpatient behavioral health services in the Southern Tier, the addition of dedicated comfort rooms puts us ahead of the curve in terms of preventative treatment.”

A comfort room is a designated space that is designed in a way that is calming to the senses, according to Gina Reagan, Director of Behavioral Health. Comfort rooms are furnished with a variety of sensory items, including therapy balls, weighted blankets and wraps, relaxation bundles inclusive of hand held massagers, aromatherapy aides, a selection of relaxation music, and soft, flexible furniture.

“These rooms offer patients a sanctuary from stress,” said Reagan. “For staff, this new environment adds another tool for helping patients to prevent and decrease agitation and aggressive behaviors.” Comfort rooms not only may improve patient experience while at St. James, but may also result in coping skills that transfer to home care after patients are discharged.

The comfort rooms and the new treatment they will facilitate is one outgrowth of the hospital’s participation in the Positive Alternatives to Restraint and Seclusion (PARS) program through the Office of Mental Health. The collaboration aims to positively change the management of escalating behaviors. Reagan sees other opportunities for new treatment options in the coming months as a result of PARS.

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According to Sylvia Bryant, Foundation Executive Director, this project illustrates the positive impact of private support for the organization. “Every dollar contributed to the St. James Mercy Foundation makes a real difference to the quality of healthcare services available in our community,” Bryant said. “Every gift is appreciated by not only patients but also hospital staff, enhancing the kind of care they are able to provide.”

More information about the St. James Mercy Foundation is available from Foundation staff at 607.324.8240, or by visiting [www.stjamesmercy.org](http://www.stjamesmercy.org).



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