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## HOSPITAL STRETCHES OUTREACH EFFORTS FURTHER INTO COMMUNITY

A company's commitment to a worthy cause  
helps to build brand loyalty

In an ever-changing, competitive marketplace, companies seeking differentiation may consider cause-related marketing to enhance community outreach activities and promote positive relationships with employees, customers and community.

CRM in the strictest sense can be the integration of outreach/marketing efforts between business and not-for-profits, and now even not-for-profit health systems are getting in on a piece of the action.

Hospitals traditionally have used community outreach to raise awareness of products and services, and enhance wellness and disease prevention. Recently, La Porte Regional Health System has taken that philosophy one step further and partnered with others to offer more robust programming to a larger audience, ultimately improving the quality of life for residents in and around La Porte County.

Often touted as a way “to merge your profit center with your passion center,” CRM-type community outreach efforts can help companies reach customers in unique and interesting ways; LRHS is no different. Recent studies indicate the majority of the U.S. population prefers to do business with socially responsible companies. Visible community outreach strategies help hospitals connect with the communities they serve and build trust and brand loyalty. They are viewed as partners in wellness and prevention, not simply entities that address disease and sickness.

While not traditional CRM, these partnerships clearly illustrate the benefits that multiple agencies receive when working together for common causes.

### HEALTHY PARTNERSHIPS

Since 2000, the Lil' F.I.S.H. Club (Feel Important.Stay Healthy) — a partnership between LRHS, the La Porte Community School Corp., and three private schools — has given more than 4,700 fourth- and fifth-grade students tools to establish healthy behavior patterns and make positive health/lifestyle decisions. The Lil' F.I.S.H. Club program utilizes health risk appraisals and year-long educational programs offered by LRHS staff and volunteers to affect healthy decision-making.

Lil' F.I.S.H. is offered through partnerships with Purdue University North Central, La Porte YMCA, La Porte Fire Department and Police Department, and the American Dental Association.

For the past two years, Dump Your Plumpä, a community weight-loss initiative, has been a partnership between LRHS and the La Porte Family YMCA, funded by La Porte United Way and the Lilly Endowment. In 2007, this competitive program involved 1,082 La Porte County residents, netting a countywide loss of 8,607 pounds — an average of 7.95 pounds per participant — and more than 43,000 days of exercise for the 10-week program.

In 2004, the 2Big Hearts Foundation chose La Porte Hospital as a local partner to raise awareness of undiagnosed heart disease in women. Founder Jim Clarke, after the untimely death of his wife and sister from undiagnosed cardiomyopathy, reached out to La Porte Hospital and their Women's HeartAdvantage Program to offer free heart screenings to women in our community.

**“These efforts often increase sales and customer loyalty, improve employee morale and dedication, interest the media, inspire others to get involved, and impact our world positively.”**

tions efforts by endorsing service messages, or partnering on service. These efforts often increase

employee morale and dedication, interest the media, inspire others to get involved, and impact our world positively.

In turn, businesses can assist by lending support and credibility to products and services of local hospitals, and by working together, for example, on campaigns for cancer awareness, heart disease prevention or chronic disease management programs.

Embracing a cause makes good business sense. Nothing builds brand loyalty among today's increasingly hard-to-please consumers like a company's commitment to a worthy cause. Other things being equal, many consumers would rather do business with a company that stands for something beyond profits.

In late September, 2Big Hearts will celebrate the 1,000th woman screened at the La Porte event. Companies don't have to jump on board with a weight loss initiative or volunteer for a Lil' F.I.S.H. module to connect with their consumers in meaningful ways. They simply can integrate cause-related marketing into their marketing and public rela-