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THINK SMART PROGRAM – KEEPING OUR KIDS SAFE TAKES A VILLAGE!

Port Jefferson, NY (June 10, 2010) – It takes a Village to keep our children safe and healthy! In an effort to promote helmet safety and prevent serious head injury among our children, St. Charles Hospital and Port Jefferson Village Code Enforcement are implementing a new program called ***Think Smart: Helmet Safety Reward Program***.

New York state law requires that children under age 17 wear a helmet while bicycling, skateboarding and roller-skating. *Think Smart* is a program that uses positive reinforcement to enforce the helmet law. Code Enforcement officers hand out **positive** tickets to reward children and adolescents “caught” **wearing** their helmets. Each ticket includes information on brain injury and helmet safety as well as a reward for a free ice cream cone at Sno White & The Seven Flavors ice cream shop in Port Jefferson. The program fosters safe and responsible behavior, strengthens community, and builds positive relationships between youth and police officers.

Brain injury is a leading cause of death and disability among children and adolescents. Each year approximately 567,000 people go to hospital emergency departments with bicycle-related injuries; about 350,000 of those are children under the age of 15. Of those children, about 130,000 sustain brain injuries. According to the Department of Health and Human Resources, bicycle accidents are most likely to occur within 5 blocks of home while almost half occur in driveways and on sidewalks. In addition, statistics show that between 70 and 80% of all fatal bicycle crashes involves brain injuries. A properly worn helmet is the single most effective safety device available and can reduce brain injury and death by as much as 88%. The goal of the *Think Smart* program is to insure that children in Village of Port Jefferson remain safe and healthy while enjoying their summer vacation.

Think Smart is part of the *Smart Choice* program offered by Bill Hannigan, Director, Adaptive Sports/Community Outreach, St. Charles Hospital. Mr. Hannigan, a wheelchair user himself following a spinal cord injury, travels to elementary, middle and high schools throughout Suffolk County presenting the prevention and disability awareness program. The program educates students, teachers and community members on the importance of using safety belts and helmets in order to prevent injuries to the spinal cord and brain. In addition, Hannigan educates the students and staff on disability awareness. The hour-long program ends with students having the opportunity to use a wheelchair while trying to perform basic tasks of everyday living.

For more information on the Think Smart or Smart Choice programs at St. Charles Hospital, please call (631) 474-6797.

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St. Charles Hospital is a 231-bed, not-for-profit hospital located in Port Jefferson, New York. The hospital’s centers of excellence include orthopedics, obstetrics and rehabilitation. In addition, St. Charles offers services in pediatrics, including Long Island’s only pediatric inpatient traumatic brain injury program, neonatology, radiology, palliative care, neurosurgery, emergency medicine, diabetes, community re-entry, general medical and surgical services, video-EEG monitoring and a nationally certified Sleep Disorders Center. St. Charles Hospital is a member of Catholic Health Services of Long Island.