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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kids Alliance for Better Care Celebrates Evans Memorial Hospital's Emergency Department as Part of the Pediatric Emergency Care Project

CLAXTON, Ga. — The Evans Memorial Hospital (EMH) Emergency Department was recognized for its commitment to strengthening pediatric emergency care in Evans County during an Aug. 9 ribbon-cutting ceremony. Evans Memorial Hospital was celebrated for reaching key milestones as a participating hospital in the Kids Alliance for Better Care (KidsABC). The Alliance, established in 2023, is a collaboration between Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM), its Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center (GRHIC) and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta (Children's).

Georgia rural hospitals face unique challenges in their ability to treat and keep pediatric patients in their communities, and KidsABC is focused on improving access to quality pediatric care.

"As one of Georgia's 71 rural hospitals, we are frequently challenged with equipment, staff education and technology needs related to caring for our pediatric population," said Bill Lee, chief executive officer of Evans Memorial Hospital. "In 2024, we experienced a 20% growth of children seeking care in our emergency department. This vital program is a great opportunity for our community."

KidsABC helps participating hospitals, like Evans Memorial Hospital, acquire child-friendly equipment, complete pediatric-specific emergency care staff training and implement the latest protocols and policies for treating children with critical conditions, such as asthma and diabetic ketoacidosis.

"Today signifies a major achievement for Evans Memorial Hospital, enabling access to care for our most precious population and advancing the mission of 'keeping care for kids at home' through this meaningful project. Most recently, our emergency care team was presented with a 10-day-old critical patient. Our well-trained caregivers were able to provide lifesaving and stabilizing care to this patient and ensure that we could deliver the right care at the right place and the right time," said Lee.

Evans Memorial Hospital commemorated its KidsABC participation and completion of milestones with a ribbon cutting hosted by the Claxton-Evans County Chamber of Commerce and attended by hospital, Children's, Mercer University School of Medicine, and GRHIC

representatives. As part of the celebration, community members were invited to a free Teddy Bear Clinic.

“Today marks a very important moment for kids in rural Georgia and in Evans County,” said Mercer University School of Medicine Dean Jean R. Sumner, M.D., FACP. “We are honored to recognize the ED staff for their dedication to pediatric emergency care training and refining their skills to provide the best care for kids. Children are not just tiny adults when it comes to the practice of emergency medicine. They require special care and appropriate equipment and tools to help keep their care here at home. Evans Memorial Hospital has been a strong, committed KidsABC participant and has set the bar very high for pediatric care. We commend the efforts of the staff and leadership. They are making a difference in children’s lives and will continue to do so for years to come.”

“Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta congratulates Evans Memorial Hospital on achieving this milestone,” said Marc Welsh, Children’s V.P. of child advocacy and chief diversity officer. “The objectives of KidsABC align with Children’s vision to ‘Do Everything Possible to Make Anything Possible for Kids.’ We want to ensure all the children of Georgia have access to quality health care and, by participating in KidsABC, hospitals like Evans Memorial Hospital are building capacity to serve even more kids in their own communities.”

KidsABC brings together a network of rural hospital emergency departments, pediatric offices, regional and state pediatric tertiary care hospitals and school systems to address the challenge of health care access, which many rural families face. KidsABC participants are equipped with the necessary tools, protocols, training and education, so families have access to subspecialty care, mental health care and emergency medical care in their hometowns.

Programs within KidsABC address the challenges of distance to specialty care and limited resources. KidsABC emphasizes the importance of early intervention in achieving positive outcomes. Children’s provided specialized pediatric clinical guidance to launch and sustain these programs.

For More Information:

KidsABC Initiatives: <https://den.mercer.edu/school-of-medicine-announces-community-partners-in-rural-pediatric-health-care-initiative/>

KidsABC Rural Hospital Emergency Department Collaborative Expansion: <https://den.mercer.edu/musm-and-grhic-expand-major-rural-pediatric-health-care-initiative-to-newly-selected-hospitals/>

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About Mercer University School of Medicine (Macon, Savannah, Columbus and Valdosta)

Mercer University’s School of Medicine was established in 1982 to educate physicians and health professionals to meet the primary care and health care needs of rural and medically underserved areas of Georgia. Today, more than 60% of graduates currently practice in the state of Georgia, and of those, more than 80% are practicing in rural or medically underserved areas of Georgia. Mercer medical students benefit from a problem-based medical education program that provides early patient care experiences. Such an academic environment fosters the early development of clinical problem-solving and instills in each student an awareness of

the place of the basic medical sciences in medical practice. The School opened additional four-year M.D. campuses in Savannah in 2008 and in Columbus in 2021, and a clinical campus in Valdosta in 2024. Following their second year, students participate in core clinical clerkships at the School's primary teaching hospitals: Atrium Health Navicent The Medical Center and Piedmont Macon Medical Center in Macon; Memorial Health University Medical Center in Savannah; Piedmont Columbus Regional Hospital and St. Francis Hospital in Columbus; and SGMC Health in Valdosta. The School also offers master's degrees in preclinical sciences and family therapy and Ph.D.s in biomedical sciences and rural health sciences.

About Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center

In 2018, Georgia lawmakers dedicated special funds to establish a new Rural Health Innovation Center tasked with confronting the complex health care challenges and wellness disparities facing rural communities. Mercer University School of Medicine was awarded the grant funds in 2019 and formally established the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center on its Macon campus. MUSM boasts a longstanding commitment to serving rural Georgia's health needs, with a mission to educate physicians dedicated to tackling the health challenges in rural Georgia. The Rural Health Innovation Center serves as a critical resource to rural communities to improve access and effectiveness of health care by offering research, collaboration, and training opportunities.

About Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

As the only freestanding pediatric healthcare system in Georgia, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is the trusted leader in caring for kids. The not-for-profit organization's mission is to make kids better today and healthier tomorrow through more than 60 pediatric specialties and programs, top healthcare professionals, and leading research and technology. Children's is one of the largest pediatric clinical care providers in the country, managing more than one million patient visits annually at three hospitals (Arthur M. Blank, Hughes Spalding and Scottish Rite), Marcus Autism Center, the Center for Advanced Pediatrics, the Zalik Behavioral and Mental Health Center, urgent care centers and neighborhood locations. Consistently ranked among the top children's hospitals by U.S. News & World Report, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta has impacted the lives of kids in Georgia, across the United States and around the world for more than 100 years thanks to generous support from the community.

About Evans Memorial Hospital

Evans Memorial Hospital (EMH) is a licensed 49-bed acute care facility that has proudly served Evans County and surrounding rural Georgia communities since opening in 1968 following two decades of community fundraising efforts. Recognized in the past as Georgia's #1 small hospital by Georgia Trend Magazine and honored with Hometown Health's "Hospital of the Year" award in 2022, the hospital provides comprehensive medical services including 24-hour physician-staffed emergency care, advanced diagnostic imaging, surgical services, and an intensive care unit in partnership with the Telehealth program at Wellstar-Augusta University. The non-profit, public hospital operates under the governance of the Hospital Authority of Evans County and maintains full accreditation by DNV Healthcare Inc./NIAHO, ensuring the highest standards of patient care and safety. Evans Memorial distinguishes itself by bringing specialized care directly to rural residents through partnerships with visiting specialists in cardiology, orthopedics, nephrology, and other subspecialties, eliminating the need for patients to travel to larger metropolitan areas. The hospital continues to expand services and upgrade facilities, including the recent addition of a state-of-the-art cardiopulmonary rehabilitation program supported by CareSource Georgia and the Strickland Foundation. With a mission to

provide high-quality, compassionate healthcare close to home, Evans Memorial Hospital remains a vital healthcare anchor for the region, combining personalized small-town care with advanced medical capabilities.



From left: Mercer University School of Medicine Director of Rural Pediatric Projects Michael Dykes, MBA, BSN, RN; Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center Executive Director Glenda Grant, MBA; Mercer School of Medicine Student and Children's Rural Pediatric Scholar Jordan Simmons; Evans Memorial Hospital Infection Control Coordinator Avery Eason, RN; Evans Memorial Hospital Board Chair Rosalind Ivy; State Rep. Bill Werkheiser; Evans Memorial Hospital CEO Bill Lee, MBA, MHA; Claxton-Evans County Chamber of Commerce President Lanette Tippins; Children's Affiliations Operations Director Pam Mason, BSN, RN; Evans Memorial Hospital Pediatric Care Coordinator Beth Stewart, NP; Evans Memorial Hospital Director of Information Technology James Wright, MHA; Evans Memorial Hospital CFO John Wiggins, MBA; Evans Memorial Hospital Board Member Marshall Smith; Evans Memorial Hospital Director of Human Resources Jennifer Evans; Evans Memorial Hospital Controller Lucy Delgado; Evans Memorial Hospital Patient Access Manager Ashtyn Brown