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Hauntingly Good Time Planned for American Cancer Society Special Friends October 25

Fun Includes Halloween Hay Ride and Costume Party

SPRINGFIELD, IL -October 17, 2006- Participants in an award winning American Cancer Society program that links pediatric cancer patients and their siblings with medical students will be going to The Farm in Petersburg for a Halloween hay ride, weenie roast and lots of fun. Costumes are encouraged for the Special Friends party on 6 p.m. Wednesday, October 25.

The American Cancer Society's Special Friends program is a volunteer network of medical students from Southern Illinois University School of Medicine who are dedicated to providing support and friendship to pediatric cancer patients and their siblings. The medical students, who are not directly involved in the medical aspect of the children's treatment, participate in a variety of activities that help establish and promote friendships. Activities are usually held at The Pavilion at St. John's Hospital.

Earlier this year, the Special Friends program received the President's Award from the American Cancer Society Illinois Division. The coveted designation is given to programs that put into action the mission and values of the organization. Special Friends, which began in 2000, was recognized for providing not only fun activities, but a unique opportunity to dissolve the fear of "white coats" for children diagnosed with cancer and a place where the child's siblings and parents could participate as well.

"The diagnosis of cancer is frightening for anyone, so these activities provide an opportunity for the children and medical students to foster open communication and friendship," said Dr. K. Thomas Robbins, Director of the SimmonsCooper Cancer Institute at SIU and Vice President for the American Cancer Society Regional Board of Directors. "A diagnosis of cancer can be especially scary for a child who doesn't completely

understand what the disease entails. In addition to providing a safe haven where the children can simply have fun, it also gives our SIU medical students an opportunity to learn things that they may not get from a text book. All of the participants gain so much from this program.”

The American Cancer Society Special Friends program is a unique collaboration between the Society, SIU School of Medicine and St. John’s Hospital. For more information About Special Friends, contact Patient Services Representative Sara Gleckler at the American Cancer Society at 217-546-7586.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. The Illinois Division has more than 120,000 volunteers and staff fighting cancer in the state. For the most up-to-date cancer related information call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org.

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Note to media: For after hours help with this story, Wednesday evening, call 217-494-6274. The Farm, 21648 Old Farm Avenue, is located off of Route 97 in Petersburg. To get there, follow the signs posted on Route 97 or call The Farm at 632-2888.