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**Cooperative Endeavor Launches Greater Access
to Pediatric Healthcare in East St. Tammany**

*Slidell Memorial Hospital & St. Charles Community Health Center Sign Cooperative Endeavor
to Open 1st Federally Qualified Health Center in St. Tammany Parish*

Slidell, LA—June 5, 2009—The new **St. Tammany Community Health Center**, a health clinic serving children in combination with a Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, will open July 1 at 1340 14th St., on the campus of Slidell Memorial Hospital. Medicaid and sliding-scale patients are welcomed in the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), which will be operated by St. Charles Community Health Center, Inc.

“This is the first federally qualified health center in St. Tammany Parish,” said Parish President Kevin Davis. “It is only possible through the generous and cooperative efforts of St. Charles Parish Community Health Center, who permitted this extension of federal health services to St. Tammany with the support of Slidell Memorial Hospital.”

St. Tammany Community Health Center, a non-profit, tax exempt organization, will assume the primary health care of the approximately 2,300 Medicaid patients and other patients currently seen in the pediatric practice operating at the site; as well as administer the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) currently administered by SMH, which serves approximately 3,000 clients.

The new health center is made possible through a formal change in scope application process approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA.) It will also receive reimbursement from the Medicare and Medicaid programs as an FQHC. The St. Tammany Community Health Center plans to expand its services beyond Pediatrics to include primary care doctors and dental care in the future.

Davis credited community partners including Slidell Memorial Hospital, Baptist Community Ministries and the Covington Food Bank for working cooperatively with the Parish government and St. Charles Community Health Center to secure the necessary grant funding to make the project a reality.

“This is truly a labor of intense cooperation to deliver affordable access to primary care to all residents of St. Tammany Parish,” added Mark Keiser, CEO of St. Charles Community Health Center. St. Tammany Community Health Center will be staffed by Pediatrician Madhuri Dixit, MD, who has worked at the Pediatric Clinic since 1998. St. Charles Community Health Center currently operates sites in Luling and Kenner that provide primary care and some specialty services in their communities.

In the United States, 20 percent of Americans don't have a family doctor, according to a Scripps Howard News Service report. As a result, millions of Americans receive less comprehensive care, less preventive care, and seek treatment only when an illness has become more advanced and severe.

“The St. Tammany Community Health Center will provide greater access to pediatric health care initially and primary care ultimately for the underserved in the community,” said Bob Hawley, CEO of Slidell Memorial Hospital. “This initiative is an important step in creating a healthier community by providing care that treats conditions proactively and lowers healthcare costs. This project benefits everyone in the community.”

ABOUT ST. CHARLES COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

St. Charles Community Health Center, Inc. is a tax-exempt, non-profit healthcare provider with a mission to provide accessible high quality care through collaborative community efforts; promote prevention and coordinate treatment; and improve the healthcare status of the community with an emphasis on underserved and vulnerable populations. It is located online at www.stcchc.org.

The St. Charles Community Health Center's main campus is at 843 Milling Ave. in Luling. It also operates St. Charles Community Health Center - Kenner Pediatric Corner, located at 200 W. Esplanade in Kenner. St. Charles Community Health Center also operated a mobile medical unit that was one of the few fully operational facilities in Southeast Louisiana providing care to the underinsured and underserved residents of Southeast Louisiana.

ABOUT SLIDELL MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Slidell Memorial Hospital is a full-service 182-bed acute care not-for-profit community hospital located at 1001 Gause Blvd. in the heart of Slidell. Founded in 1959, SMH is the third-largest employer in St. Tammany Parish, employing 1,100 full, part-time and pool clinical and administrative employees. SMH serves as a primary healthcare resource for families in St. Tammany Parish, LA; Pearl River County, MS; and the greater Mississippi Gulf Coast region. It is located online at <http://www.slidellmemorial.org>.

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