

Press Release from the Maine Sea Coast Mission

March 12, 2008 – For Immediate Release

Contact: Steve Richards at 288-5097 or srichards@seacoastmission.org

Telemedicine Technology Advances Demonstrated At Maine Sea Coast Mission

BAR HARBOR - Three significant advances in the delivery of high quality health care to rural communities were demonstrated to health care providers from Mount Desert Island Hospital, islanders, and Maine Sea Coast Mission staff on Tuesday, March 11, 2007, at the Colket Center in Bar Harbor. Gary DeLong, Executive Director of the Mission, reported: “The Maine Sea Coast Mission has been providing access to high quality health care for islanders through the use of telemedicine based aboard the *Sunbeam V* with a highly competent nurse since 2001. However, through a convergence of technology advancements, telemedicine is entering a new age which will dramatically enhance the efficacy of health care provided through telemedicine.”

Representatives of Polycom, the manufacturer of the interactive video conferencing equipment through which telemedicine is provided, and AMD Telemedicine, which manufactures the diagnostic equipment used with the Polycom equipment to make telemedicine possible to residents in rural areas who do not have health care facilities or whose facilities do not have the specialists necessary to treat certain conditions. Recently, major advances have occurred in both the Polycom and AMD equipment which was readily apparent to the health care providers, islanders and Mission staff attending the demonstration. The Polycom units now transmit and receive multiple images at high definition simultaneously. This equipment greatly enhances the images shown and enables diagnoses to be made using electronic stethoscopes, gastro intestinal scopes, and otoscopes.

In addition to the significant advantages in the capabilities of the telemedicine equipment is the fact that the connectivity bandwidth has been dramatically increased. Currently the telemedicine unit on the Sunbeam operates at 128 kps. The technology now exists to increase the bandwidth to 3,000 kps which has a dramatic impact upon the image shown on the telemedicine monitor. When combined with high definition and the enhanced diagnostic equipment medical staff will be able to see much clearer images on their office monitors enabling them to better diagnose health problems.

Mr. DeLong noted that the capacity to take advantage of these advances has been enhanced due to a \$24 million grant that was made by the Rural Health Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services several weeks ago to a consortium of 75 health care providers in northern New England (Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont). The purpose of the grant is to improve the delivery of telemedicine in rural areas of northern New England through the improvement of the infrastructure. The Maine Sea Coast Mission partners with the Mount Desert Island Hospital and several other health care providers all of which are part of this consortium.

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