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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**St. James Mercy Hospital Receives \$1,000 to  
Support Local Hunger Relief**

**HORNELL, NY (December 23, 2014)** – St. James Mercy Hospital (SJMH) announced that it was been awarded a \$1,000 grant from Sodexo Foundation to fund the Hornell-based Backpack Food Program. The grant will be provided to the Food Bank of the Southern Tier to support local hunger relief efforts for children in need. SJMH was the only Sodexo account in New York State to receive a grant.

Sodexo’s Backpack Food Program brings local food banks and schools together to provide backpacks filled with nutritious, easy-to-prepare, non-perishable food for students who are at-risk for hunger on weekends. Backpacks are discreetly distributed to deserving students.

Erika Zerkowski, registered dietitian and clinical nutrition manager, oversees the Backpack Food Program at SJMH. “Our efforts have been directed toward supporting the area Food Bank and sponsoring food drives, with goods donated by SJMH employees,” she said. “This grant will be used to directly benefit students at Hornell and Canisteo-Greenwood school districts.”

During the 2014/15 school year, Sodexo Foundation is helping to fund 60 backpack food programs in communities across America. This support will help provide children in need with 430,000 backpacks or the equivalent of 1.7 million meals.

“There are 16 million children in the U.S. who are at risk of hunger,” said James Wade, BackPack Coordinator for Food Bank of the Southern Tier. “That’s one in five children. The Sodexo/SJMH contribution will make it possible to provide over 300 backpacks to children in the Hornell and Canisteo area.”

“We are delighted to participate in this program and play a significant role in providing resources and food to local kids in need,” said Zerkowski. “We are grateful to have a partner like Sodexo whose mission is to improve quality of life in the communities they serve.”

Sodexo, Inc. is an international company that provides food service and related services to healthcare, education and corporate clients. Sodexo Foundation is a not-for-profit organization with the mission to ensure that every child in the United States grows up with dependable access to nutritious food. Since its inception, Sodexo Foundation has granted more than \$22 million to help end childhood hunger.

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Caption: Sodexo/SJMH representatives present \$1,000 to the Food Bank of the Southern Tier to support its Backpack Program, which will support over 300 children in the Hornell/Canisteo area.

*Pictured left to right: Sylvia Bryant, SJMH VP Mission Integration & Community Outreach; Jen Sullivan, SJMH President & CEO; Erika Zerkowski, Sodexo/SJMH Clinical Nutrition Manager; Kathleen Schaffner, Southern Tier Food Bank Annual Giving Manager; Peg Webb, Sodexo/SJMH Nutrition Director; and Stan Konopko, SJMH Chief Financial Officer.*