Patients are benefiting from robotic-assisted surgery with less pain and scarring, fewer complications, shorter hospital stays, and significantly faster recoveries,” said Dr. Bell-Thomson.

“The da Vinci, we are riding the wave of the future by offering our patients the most minimally-invasive heart surgery available,”

The da Vinci surgical system features a high-powered video monitoring system and four robotic arms that are inserted into the patient through small, keyhole-sized incisions. The surgeon is able to control and guide the robotic instruments while sitting at a console a few feet away from the operating table.

In December, John Bell-Thomson, MD, chair of Mercy’s Cardiothoracic Surgery Department performed the area’s first robotic-assisted mitral valve repair surgery. Acquired by the hospital in 2005, the $1.5 million da Vinci Surgical System® is also used for intricate urological and gynecological procedures.

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“In the old Star Trek TV series, Dr. McCoy waved his medical wand for plenty of successful surgeries aboard the Starship Enterprise. While the “medical wand” has not made it to the operating rooms yet, a robot has earned its spot on Mercy Hospital’s surgical team and is leading the way for breakthrough minimally invasive surgery in Western New York.

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“Patients are benefiting from robotic-assisted surgery with less pain and scarring, fewer complications, shorter hospital stays, and significantly faster recoveries,” said Dr. Bell-Thomson. “With the da Vinci, we are riding the wave of the future by offering our patients the most minimally-invasive heart surgery available.”

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New Classroom Goes Beyond the Walls

“We want to provide our students with a learning environment that offers both classroom and real-world experience,” said Sister Mary Ellen Twist, president of Mount Mercy Academy (MMA), who was commenting on a new health science curriculum involving Catholic Health, MMA and Bishop Timon-St. Jude High School.

The three organizations have partnered to create a unique educational opportunity for students who may be interested in pursuing health care careers. The program involves mentoring, job shadowing, tours and internship components at Mercy Hospital and other Catholic Health hospitals.

“Our Mercy Academy of Science and Technology features advanced placement courses and concurrent enrollment with local colleges,” said Sister Mary Ellen. “The hands-on experience gained through this partnership enhances this program for our students.”

As part of this learning opportunity, MMA and Bishop Timon will be offering generous tuition discounts to Catholic Health families of incoming freshmen and transfer students for the 2010/2011 school year.

For more information, contact MMA at 825-8796, ext. 511 or visit their website at www.mtmercy.org; or contact Bishop Timon at 862-3610, ext. 237 or visit www.bishoptimon.com.

Mercy Facebook Attracts Over 500 Fans!

Mercy Hospital is pleased to announce that its Facebook page has grown to over 500 Fans! The page was launched in early 2009 as another way to communicate with associates. Special thanks go out to administrators Jason Sewell, pathology supervisor, and Elayn Young, nurse manager of the Emergency Department, (pictured here) who oversee the page and were instrumental in this successful endeavor.
Mercy Flourishes in Peru Mission

Last November, Steve Piesczynski, Mercy Hospital’s director of Facilities and Engineering participated in his third mission trip to Chulucanas, Peru with Global Health Ministry, affiliated with Catholic Health East.

“Each time I go on these missions, I get a renewed appreciation of what we have in the United States,” feels Piesczynski. “I think that even the poorest of the poor here have it better than those in Peru and similar countries.”

According to Piesczynski, Global Health Ministry sponsors five mission trips per year to Peru, Haiti, Guatemala, and Jamaica. In his latest primary care/surgical mission to Peru, he was a member of a 40-person team made up of surgeons, operating room (OR) nurses, anesthesiologists, physician assistants, surgical technicians, and a few non-clinical people who handle OR and pharmacy supplies. They recorded over 1,000 primary care visits and performed nearly 200 surgeries during their stay from October 29 to November 15, 2009.

“During my trips, my designated job was in the warehouse, but because of my engineering background, I also took care of the OR lighting that requires special power adapters and was involved in repairing equipment when needed,” Piesczynski indicated.

Piesczynski seems to naturally know where Mercy begins when he said, “For me, it’s about giving something back to the poor and disadvantaged.”

For information on mission opportunities, contact Mercy’s Mission Integration office at 828-2190 or visit Global Health Ministry at www.globalhealthministry.org.

Ali Ghomi, M.D.

“The word is out on robotic surgery and it is well overdue in Buffalo,” said Ali Ghomi, M.D. of Mercy Hospital’s Obstetrics/Gynecology (OB/GYN) Department, who performed the area’s first robotic-assisted hysterectomy for benign indications, myomectomy (removal of fibroids in the uterus) and sacrocolpopexy (repair of pelvic organ prolapse) last fall at Mercy Hospital.

“My patients are back on their feet in days versus weeks,” noted Dr. Ghomi. “Robotic surgery is helping us pioneer a new standard of patient care in gynecological surgery.”

Last October, Pam Littere of Buffalo became the first patient locally to undergo a robotic-assisted hysterectomy for a benign condition. Having two previous open abdominal surgeries in 2005 and 2008, she knew firsthand the difference in pain level and recovery time with the robotic technique.

“With my first abdominal surgery, it took me almost 4 weeks to just stand up and have the strength to walk around, not to mention the amount of pain I was in,” said Littere. “With the robotic surgery, I felt almost 100% in only 8 days…it was remarkable.”

Dr. Ghomi, who also serves as fellowship director of Minimally Invasive Surgery and assistant professor of OB/GYN at the University of Buffalo, estimates that before the arrival of robotic surgery, an open surgery was

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Mercy at Work

Mercy Hospital held a Blessing for the Mercy Mitten Christmas Tree on January 6, the Feast of the Three Kings/Epiphany. For the last three years, the Mercy Mitten Tree has grown into a tradition as associates adorn the tree with new mittens, hats and scarves for poor and needy families. The mitten collection began on the Feast of St. Nicholas on December 5. Items were donated to the nearby Grace Lutheran Church clothing pantry and the Child Advocacy Center.

Physician Spotlight,
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was needed in over 90 percent of cases for myomectomies, sacrocolpopexies, and complex hysterectomies.

“Many hysterectomies are currently performed laparoscopically but complex cases often require conversion to an open procedure,” he explained. “The advanced technology of the da Vinci robot has changed that by giving us a surgical tool that provides the magnified visualization and surgical precision necessary to successfully perform a complicated hysterectomy while maintaining a minimally invasive approach.”

“Women should know that this option exists in our community,” expressed Diana Dabell, a 39-year-old emergency medicine resident with the University of Buffalo, who recently underwent the first robotic-assisted myomectomy in the region with Dr. Ghomi. “The surgery only interrupted my life for a week rather than 6 weeks if I had needed an open operation.”

Dear Mercy Associates,

Thank you, all! Your generous donations to our Christmas Hand in Hand program provided for 30 families’ holiday celebrations!

Our Helping Hand Fund has grown as well due to your donations through payroll deduction.

During 2010, be assured,

“Though your destination is not yet clear, You can trust the promise of this opening; Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning That is at one with your life’s desire.”

(Source: To Bless the Space Between Us by John O’Donohue)

Mary Kienzle
Vice President of Mission Integration

Heart Center Named “Program of Excellence”

The Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI) program at Mercy Hospital of Buffalo has been named a “Program of Excellence” by Independent Health (IHA). PCI is commonly referred to as angioplasty. The program earned its designation based on IHA’s review of clinical and quality data, which references New York State and national benchmarks, as well as American College of Cardiology standards of care. The Heart Center exceeded many quality indicators, including the most current New York State PCI mortality data.

“Our entire team is to be congratulated for their skill and dedication in achieving these outstanding clinical outcomes,” said Salvatore Calandra, M.D., Director of Interventional Cardiology at Mercy Hospital.

In above photos, Mercy associates enjoy the annual holiday luncheon held in December.