



OSF HealthCare Foundation Announces \$1 Million Gift for Innovative Autism Solutions

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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(Nov.19, 2019 | Peoria, IL) - OSF HealthCare Foundation is pleased to announce the creation of The Charles and Sue Thomas Autism Endowment for Innovative Solutions, made possible through a \$1 million gift from Charles and Sue Thomas, from Rockford, Ill.

The gift will enable ground-breaking autism research that will focus on solutions for improving early detection of autism, dramatic improvements in care and treatment, development of supportive technology enhancements, and other innovative solutions to improve the lives of children and families living with autism.

“Our granddaughter, Graciela, is on the autism spectrum. Our family is thrilled to be part of research being done at OSF HealthCare to help her, and other families like ours, get the care needed for a life lived without limitations and uncertainty,” said Charles Thomas.

“Children diagnosed with autism hold a special place in my heart. I’m excited to join Chuck, Sue, and their family on this journey to change how we think about health care for those on the autism spectrum and redefine what is possible to unlock in helping children like Graciela reach their full potential,” said Sister Judith Ann Duvall, O.S.F., Chairperson of the Board, OSF HealthCare, in thanking the Thomas’ for their gift.

It is expected that with the fully-funded endowment, the dedicated and intentional level of research being done for autism will lead to dramatic improvements for overall health and wellness of children and families living with autism.

The work being done through the Thomas Autism Endowment will be a partnership between the University of Illinois, OSF HealthCare and the Autism Collective as part of a Jump ARCHES (Applied Research for Community Health through Engineering and Simulation) program initiative.

Through the Jump ARCHES program teams of researchers, clinicians and engineers are funded to work together for the improvement of health care quality and patient safety. The teams that receive grants through the ARCHES program are combining expertise in the broad areas of sensing devices; materials and mechanics; health information technologies; simulation; human factors/industrial ergonomics; artificial intelligence; and design, social, and behavioral sciences to develop solutions. As a result, the Thomas Autism Endowment will fund further research identified through Jump ARCHES.

“As part of the Jump ARCHES program, we are funding teams of physicians and engineers working together to develop technologies and devices that could revolutionize medical training and health care delivery. With the Thomas’ Endowment, we are now poised to identify technological and innovative solutions to improve the health and wellness of children and families living with autism,” explained Dr. John Vozenilek, Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Innovation and Digital Health, OSF HealthCare.

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OSF HealthCare is an integrated health system owned and operated by The Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, headquartered in Peoria, Illinois. OSF HealthCare employs nearly 21,000 Mission Partners (employees) in 126 locations, including 13 hospitals - 9 acute care, 4 critical access - and two colleges of nursing throughout Illinois and Michigan. Its physician network employs more than 1,200 primary care, specialist physicians, and advanced practice providers. OSF HealthCare operates an extensive network of home health services; owns OSF Saint Francis, Inc., comprised of healthcare-related businesses; and the OSF HealthCare Foundation, the philanthropic arm for the organization. More at www.osfhealthcare.org.

The **OSF HealthCare Foundation** serves to help insure the future integrity of the OSF HealthCare Mission. For more information, visit <https://www.osfhealthcarefoundation.org>