

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2006

CONTACTS:

Meg Derrer, Marketing Director, (616) 242-0474, meg.derrer@maryfreebed.com. Christine Hoek, Public Relations, (616) 662-9241, christine@articulate-pr.com

Communication Impairment Alert Card to be available statewide March 18.

NEW "ID" CARD TO HELP PEOPLE WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – A rehabilitation specialist at Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital has developed a special ID card that will make it easier for people with speech impairments to notify others of their condition.

Available statewide beginning March 18, the new Communication Impairment Alert Card was created to help those with communication impairments clearly identify their condition during an emergency or routine activities like shopping or banking. It was developed by Linda Wells, a speech language pathologist at Mary Free Bed.

"The idea for the card came after a patient shared with me his story of being pulled over for a minor traffic violation and how difficult the experience was because of his communication impairment," Wells says. "He had a brain injury which left him with slurred speech leading the officer to believe he was intoxicated."

The Communication Impairment Alert Card consists of two components: a pocket/wallet card and a notification that can be attached to a car's visor. The cards identify the person's condition and the best method of communication (e.g., writing, speaking slowly, asking yes or no questions).

"The card should eliminate some of the frustration that occurs when an individual who is slow to answer or sounds slightly different needs to interact with someone for the first time," Wells says.

The Communication Impairment Alert Card has been endorsed by all Michigan law enforcement agencies.

Cards can only be obtained through a physician or speech pathologist.

For more information about the Communication Impairment Alert Card, please contact Linda Wells at (616) 242-0425 or visit www.maryfreebed.com. To arrange an interview with its developer, please contact Christine Hoek at (616) 662-9241 or christine@articulate-pr.com.

###

Interviews and JPEG Images of the card available upon request.

Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital is an 80-bed, not-for-profit, acute rehabilitation center. Its mission is to restore independence, hope, and freedom through rehabilitation to people with disabilities. Programs include brain injury; spinal cord injury; stroke and orthopedic; pediatric/adolescent; amputee; lymphedema; vestibular; motion analysis center; rehab technology center; orthotics and prosthetics services; and driver rehab.