**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

November 18th, 2019

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**MAINE HOSPITALS RECOGNIZED FOR TOBACCO-FREE ACHEIVEMENTS**

33 Hospitals Celebrated through Annual Gold Star Standards of Excellence Program

Augusta, ME – The 10th annual Tobacco-Free Hospital Gold Star Standards of Excellence Awards Celebration, hosted by the MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence’s Breathe Easy initiative, was held on November 14th at the Maine Hospital Association. The event, attended by hospital and public health stakeholders from across the state, recognized efforts by Maine hospitals to address tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure. Thirty-three hospitals and four individual Gold Star Champions were highlighted for their achievements in advancing their campus smoke and tobacco-free policies as well as promoting tobacco-free lifestyles.

All Maine hospitals were encouraged to apply for 2019 recognition. Participating organizations that met at least seven of ten standards were recognized with a plaque. Award levels are based on best practice criteria such as a smoke and tobacco-free campus policy, annual screening for tobacco use, referral to tobacco treatment and supporting employee education related to tobacco treatment. In 2019, all participating hospitals were recognized at the silver, gold and platinum levels. To meet the platinum level, hospitals must meet all ten Gold Star Standards and include specific policy language and strategies for five additional requirements.

At the celebration event, each hospital was recognized with a plaque, celebrating their efforts. At the celebration, Kristen McAuley, Tobacco Prevention Services Director for the Center for Tobacco Independence stated that, “Hospitals serve as examples for health and wellness in their communities, having strong policies and procedures addressing around tobacco use and exposure sends an important message.” She continued, “Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease and death, we applaud these 33 Maine hospitals for their ongoing efforts to meet the Gold Star Standards of Excellence.”

The 2019 Gold Star Standards of Excellence Awardees include; at the Platinum Level: Cary Medical Center, Franklin Memorial Hospital, Houlton Regional Hospital, LincolnHealth, Maine Medical Center, MaineGeneral Medical Center, Mid Coast Hospital, Mount Desert Island Hospital, New England Rehabilitation Hospital, Northern Maine Medical Center, Pen Bay Medical Center, Redington-Fairview General Hospital, Southern Maine Health Care, Spring Harbor Hospital, St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center, and Waldo County General Hospital; at the Gold level: Bridgton Hospital, Calais Regional Hospital, Central Maine Medical Center, Down East Community Hospital, Millinocket Regional Hospital, Northern Light AR Gould Hospital, Northern Light Blue Hill Memorial Hospital, Northern Light Charles A. Dean Memorial Hospital, Northern Light Maine Coast Memorial Hospital, Northern Light Mercy Hospital, Rumford Hospital, Stephens Memorial Hospital, and York Hospital; and at the Silver Level: Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center, Northern Light Inland Hospital, Northern Light Sebasticook Valley Hospital and St. Joseph’s Hospital.

Applying hospitals were invited to nominate an individual or department that had championed tobacco-free efforts at their organization. Four Gold Star Champions were highlighted at the event: Barbara Crowley of Coastal Healthcare Alliance, Dr. Dena Whitesell of Maine Medical Center, Dr. Timothy Goltz of LincolnHealth and Joanne Fortin of Northern Maine Medical Center.

For more information about Gold Star Standards of Excellence recognition program, please visit BreatheEasyMaine.org/Gold-Star-Standards-of-Excellence.

The Breathe Easy Tobacco-Free Hospital initiative at the MaineHealth Center for Tobacco Independence is dedicated to providing Maine’s hospitals with the information and resources needed to make all organizations smoke and tobacco-free.

The program is funded by Maine Prevention Services. Maine Prevention Services is an initiative through the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention working across the state to impact tobacco, substance use, and obesity.

Celebration photos are available on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pg/BreatheEasyMaine/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1774508686016077).

**2019 Gold Star Standards of Excellence Awardees:**

Platinum Level:

Cary Medical Center Franklin Memorial Hospital

Houlton Regional Hospital LincolnHealth

Maine Medical Center MaineGeneral Medical Center

Mid Coast Hospital New England Rehabilitation Hospital

Northern Maine Medical Center Pen Bay Medical Center

Redington-Fairview General Hospital Southern Maine Health Care

Spring Harbor Hospital St. Mary’s Regional Medical Center

Waldo County General Hospital Mount Desert Island Hospital

Gold Level:

Bridgton Hospital Calais Regional Hospital

Central Maine Medical Center Down East Community Hospital

Millinocket Regional Hospital Northern Light AR Gould Hospital

Northern Light Blue Hill Memorial Hospital Northern Light Charles A. Dean Memorial Hospital

Northern Light Maine Coast Memorial Hospital

Northern Light Mercy Hospital Rumford Hospital

Stephens Memorial Hospital York Hospital

Silver Level:

Northern Light Eastern Maine Medical Center

Northern Light Inland Hospital

Northern Light Sebasticook Valley Hospital

St. Joseph’s Hospital

Gold Star Champions:

Barbara Crowley, Coastal Healthcare Alliance

Dr. Dena Whitesell, Maine Medical Center

Dr. Timothy Goltz, LincolnHealth

Joanne Fortin, Northern Maine Medical Center