



NEWS RELEASE

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**KNOXVILLE'S CARIS HEALTHCARE WINS
TENNESSEE'S TOP QUALITY AWARD**

Caris Healthcare, a leading provider of hospice care based in Knoxville, has won the prestigious 2008 Tennessee Excellence Award, the highest award given by the nonprofit Tennessee Center for Performance Excellence (TNCPE).

Caris, Tennessee's only state-wide provider of hospice services, offers compassionate and professional medical, emotional, social and spiritual support to patients and families coping with life-limiting illnesses.

As the top winner, Caris was recognized as an outstanding example of a high performance organization, exhibiting processes that serve as role models for other businesses.

"Winners of this award have demonstrated a level of organizational sophistication typically found in the most forward-thinking, competitive organizations," said Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen. "I applaud Caris Healthcare for its achievement and for receiving this honor."

To date, only 19 Tennessee companies have won the Excellence Award from TNCPE, and four of those also won the Baldrige National Quality Award. A board of 200 business







experts assessed this year's applicants in seven categories: leadership; strategic planning; customer and market focus; measurement; analysis and knowledge management; workforce focus; process management; and results.

Caris Healthcare CEO Norman McRae credited several factors for Caris' success, especially the positive, measurable feedback the company regularly gathers from patients, patient families, employees and health care partners.

"Our vision is to be a world class hospice service," McRae said. "However, it is more important that our customers and patients recognize the world class service and care we provide." The company's 2008 survey results show that:

- 98 percent of patients and families are satisfied with Caris, with 69.1 percent rating the company as excellent.
- 96 percent of employees are satisfied with the company, and 57.4 percent are very satisfied.
- 93 percent of health care partners who refer patients to Caris are satisfied with patient care, customer service and communication, with 63 percent rating Caris as excellent.

"We value the voice of the patient and the family, and we value the voice of our employees and referring sources - the doctors, hospitals and nursing homes we work with," said McRae, who formerly served as a chaplain in hospice care.

"This award has helped us on our journey of excellence," he added. "We're always striving to improve. We're a learning organization."

Tennessean Dixie Carter, star of TV's "Designing Women," used Caris' services for her family and has served as a spokesperson for the company, including on a Web site video at <http://www.carishealthcare.com>.

Caris, which means grace in Greek, is five years old and has served nearly 10,000 patients in its short history. The company now employs 383 people across Tennessee, with 73 of those in Knoxville.

Caris will receive its award at the 16th annual Tennessee Awards Banquet in Franklin, Tennessee, February 18, 2009.

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