FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ascension, Parent Company of Saint Thomas Health, Names Two Additional Board Members: Dr. Regina Benjamin, Former U.S. Surgeon General; and Sheila Burke, Faculty Research Fellow at Harvard Kennedy School of Government

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St. Louis – September 30, 2014 – Ascension, parent company of Saint Thomas Health, is pleased to announce two new members of the Ascension Board of Directors:

- Regina M. Benjamin, MD, MBA, is the NOLA.com/Times-Picayune Endowed Chair, Public Health Sciences, Xavier University of Louisiana, and Former U.S. Surgeon General (2009-2013). She specializes in prevention policies and health promotion among individuals as well as large populations, especially concerning community health and well-being. She has special interest in rural healthcare, breastfeeding, health disparities, suicide, violence, and mental health. From founding the Bayou Clinic in Alabama to her leadership role in the worldwide advancement of preventive health, Dr. Regina Benjamin has forged a career that has been recognized by a broad spectrum of organizations including becoming the first physician under the age of 40 and the first African-American woman to be elected to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees. Past board memberships include the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Kaiser Family Foundation Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, and Catholic Health Association. She is a member of the Institute of Medicine. Dr. Benjamin was the 1998 United States recipient of the Nelson Mandela Award for Health and Human Rights and received the 2000 National Caring Award, which was inspired by Mother Teresa. In addition to receiving the Papal honor Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice from Pope Benedict XVI, she is a MacArthur Genius Award Fellow, and in May 2013, Reader’s Digest ranked her No. 22 of the “100 Most Trusted People in America.”

- Sheila P. Burke, MPA, RN, FAAN, is a Faculty Research Fellow and Adjunct Lecturer at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a Strategic Advisor and Chair, Government Relations and Public Policy at Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell & Berkowitz, PC, in Washington, D.C., providing advice and counsel on a variety of federal policies focused on healthcare delivery and financing. She served as Executive Dean of Harvard’s Kennedy School from 1996-2000. Previously she had been Chief of Staff to former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (1985-1996), a professional staff member of the Senate Committee on Finance (1979-1982), and Deputy Staff Director of that committee (1982-1985). She also serves as a Distinguished Visitor at the
"We are excited to welcome these distinguished individuals to the Ascension Board of Directors," said Gino Pazzaglini, Chair, Ascension Sponsor. “As Dr. Benjamin and Ms. Burke bring their gifts to our national health ministry’s Board, we look forward to their contributions and counsel to help us advance our Mission to serve all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable."

"Healthcare in the U.S. is evolving, and both Dr. Benjamin and Ms. Burke bring tremendous gifts to Ascension and those we serve," said Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, CM, EdD, Interim Chair of the Ascension Board of Directors. “Dr. Benjamin’s clinical expertise and voice regarding health policy will be instrumental in guiding us as we make important changes to how we provide care and manage the health of communities, and shape the policies that govern care. Similarly, Sheila Burke’s deep experience in and knowledge of public policy and public health will strengthen our Board as we work to provide person-centered care to all, with special attention to the most poor and vulnerable, as an integrated national health ministry.”

The new members join current Board members Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, CM, EdD, President, DePaul University, Chicago, who serves as Interim Chair; Eduardo Conrado, Senior Vice President, Marketing & IT, Motorola Solutions, Inc., Schaumburg, Illinois; Stephen M. Dufilho, CPA, Principal, Goldsmith, Fillis & Dufilho Capital Partners, LLC, San Antonio, Texas; Eve J. Higginbotham, SM, MD, Vice Dean for Inclusion and Diversity, Perelman School of Medicine, Senior Fellow, Leonard Davis Institute for Health Economics, and Professor of Ophthalmology, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Sr. Kathleen Kelly, CSJ, PhD, Consultant, Development, St. Mary’s Academy, Inglewood, California; and W. Stancil (Stan) Starnes, JD, Chairman, Chief Executive Officer and President, ProAssurance Corp. (NYSE:PRA), Birmingham, Alabama.

Biographies and photographs of the Board of Directors are available here.

About Ascension
Ascension is a Catholic healthcare organization dedicated to the transformation of healthcare through excellent clinical care throughout the continuum of care and through innovation. Ascension is the nation’s largest Catholic and non-profit health system, providing the highest quality care to all with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable. Last year Ascension provided $1.8 billion in care of persons living in poverty and community benefit programs. Its Mission-focused Health Ministries employ more than 150,000 associates serving in more than 1,900 sites of care in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

Ascension is sponsored by Ascension Sponsor, a non-congregational public juridic person whose members include both laypersons and representatives of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Louise Province; the Congregation of St. Joseph; the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet; the Alexian Brothers Congregation; and the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

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