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**NEWS RELEASE – NURSE ANESTHETISTS BECOME PATIENTS’ EYES AND EARS DURING SURGERY**

St. Marys OH – For many, the knowledge of impending surgery can be worrisome. Thoughts of cold operating rooms, beeping monitors, masked faces, and sharp instruments all add to the unease. The reassuring news is that an expert anesthesia provider will keep you safe and comfortable during your procedure. More often than not, that expert will be a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) according to Bill Harr, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist at Joint Township Hospital.

As the hands-on provider of approximately 65 percent of all anesthetics delivered in the United States each year, CRNAs touch the lives of millions of patients and their families annually. In honor of this responsibility and privilege, and to celebrate a sterling record of patient safety that extends back to the late 1800s, nurse anesthetists all across America will celebrate National Nurse Anesthetists Week January 22-28, 2006.

CRNAs are the patients’ eyes and ears during surgery,” said Harr. “We are the patients’ advocates when they can’t speak for themselves. It’s an awesome responsibility and a sacred trust upon which our profession has built its reputation for safety and quality care.

“CRNAs take their patients through the entire operative process – including sleep, monitoring vital signs, adjusting anesthesia levels and waking the patient after surgery,” said Harr.

Although nurse anesthetists were the first anesthesia providers, much of the public is unaware that today CRNAs practice in every part of the country, deliver every type of anesthetic, and work in every setting in which anesthesia care is delivered. Not only are CRNAs a major provider of anesthesia care for the civilian population in the United States, they are the main provider of anesthesia care to American soldiers stationed around the world.

“As a CRNA, you have to be ever vigilant,” said Harr. “You have to be aware of every heartbeat, every breath, and be ready to respond if something isn’t right. Since the early 1980s, patient deaths related to anesthesia mishaps have declined from approximately two for every 10,000 anesthetics given to approximately one for every 240,000 anesthetics given. CRNA are proud to have played a considerable role in that improvement.

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