



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Veteran Receives Life-saving Care at Sacred Heart Hospital

Heart disease has brought Danny Kennedy much suffering in his 55 years of living. His older brother, his twin brother and his mother all died of heart-related conditions.

Like them, Danny also struggles with heart problems. He has been on a heart transplant list and has undergone a triple coronary bypass. A catheter ablation procedure successfully reset his irregular heartbeat, and 11 stents help keep blood flowing through his arteries. For Danny, Sudden Cardiac Death Syndrome is a possibility that leads him to live life to the fullest – when he is able.

Danny is a veteran of the U.S. Army. He was stationed in Germany from 1979 to 1983, where he served as a vehicle mechanic and tow-truck driver, transporting missiles by vehicle.

Several years ago, while in San Francisco, Danny had excellent experiences with medical care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). His cardiology specialist, who

earlier in his career had helped develop a technique called contrast echocardiogram imaging, was able to locate the area of Danny's heart that was misfiring and restore normal heart rhythm.

After the recent death of his second mother, Danny and his wife, along with his 82-year-old father, decided they needed to make a fresh start. They chose Northwest Florida for their new home because it offers better fishing.



“The doctor said I had to retire and sell my Harley,” Danny said. “He told me I should buy a boat and go fishing. That’s just what we did.”

Early this year Danny had another coronary blockage. He needed to see an expert interventional cardiologist, and he had no time to waste.

The closest qualified VA cardiologist was at Keesler Air Force Base, beyond Biloxi, Miss.— a two-hour drive from Danny’s home in Pace, Fla. He waited six weeks just to get a call from the office to set up an appointment, and the wait to see the doctor would have been two months more.

During the wait, Danny learned about the Veterans Choice Program, which gives veterans the opportunity to receive healthcare outside the VA network if they face wait times in excess of 30 days or have to travel farther than 40 miles from their home. Sacred Heart Health System and its parent organization, Ascension, are participating providers in Veterans Choice and working to ensure timely access to high-quality care for veterans.

Danny applied for the program and completed the process to get approval to see one of Sacred Heart’s cardiology experts with the support of Ashlie Fitzsimmons, manager of Military Navigation Services at Sacred Heart.

Danny researched Sacred Heart physicians, and once approved, got an appointment right away with Dr. Mark Grise, an interventional cardiologist with Sacred Heart Medical Group.

“My procedure was scheduled quickly,” Danny said. “He performed a heart catheterization through my wrist to open the blockage in my artery. He has me on some meds for ongoing treatment.”

Danny said his experience with Dr. Grise and his staff, as well as his stay at Sacred Heart Hospital Pensacola, could not have been better. He encourages all his military friends to apply for Veterans Choice and use Sacred Heart’s doctors and services.

Now he’s back on the boat with his dad, fishing every chance he gets – just like the doctor ordered.

About the Veterans Choice Program

The Veterans Choice Program enables veterans who have waited more than 30 days for medical care, or are more than 40 miles from an appropriate VA healthcare provider, to receive needed care close to home from a non-VA provider.

As part of Ascension, the nation's largest nonprofit healthcare system and the world's largest Catholic health system, Sacred Heart joins Ascension facilities in 24 states and the District of Columbia in serving as an official provider of veterans care outside the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

"No population is more vulnerable and more deserving of our compassion and support than our nation's veterans," said Susan Davis, president and CEO of Sacred Heart Health System. "The men and women in our community who have sacrificed so much for us deserve access to high-quality healthcare."

For more information about Veterans Choice, visit www.ascension.org/veterans.

About Ascension

Ascension (www.ascension.org) is a faith-based healthcare organization dedicated to transformation through innovation across the continuum of care. As the largest non-profit health system in the U.S. and the world's largest Catholic health system, Ascension is committed to delivering compassionate, personalized care to all, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those most vulnerable. In FY2015, Ascension provided nearly \$2 billion in care of persons living in poverty and other community benefit programs. Approximately 160,000 associates and 36,000 aligned providers serve in 2,500 sites of care – including 142 hospitals and more than 30 senior living facilities – in 24 states and the District of Columbia. In addition to healthcare delivery, Ascension subsidiaries provide a variety of services and solutions including physician practice management, venture capital investing, investment management, biomedical engineering, clinical care management, information services, risk management, and contracting through Ascension's own group purchasing organization.

About Sacred Heart Health System

Sacred Heart Health System is Northwest Florida's leading provider of high-quality health care to children and adults. The hub of the Sacred Heart system is its 566-bed Sacred Heart Hospital in Pensacola that includes the region's only Children's Hospital, a Level II Trauma Center, a Cancer Center affiliated with MD Anderson Cancer Network and a Heart & Vascular Institute. The Health System also includes Sacred Heart Hospital on the Emerald Coast, a 58-bed community hospital near Destin, Sacred Heart Hospital on the Gulf, a 19-bed hospital, in Port St. Joe, and Sacred Heart Medical Group, a large regional network of primary care and specialty physicians with offices across seven coastal counties between Gulf Shores, Ala. and Apalachicola, Fla. For more information, call 850-416-7000 or visit online at www.sacred-heart.org.

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** Photo Caption**

Veteran Danny Kennedy, left, enjoys fishing with his father, Stan Kennedy, near their home in Pace. Danny received life-saving treatment at Sacred Heart Hospital through the Veterans Choice Program.

