

Trinitas Hospital

News Release

225 Williamson Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07207

Contact: Doug Harris

(908) 994-5138

dharris@trinitas.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Trinitas Hospital New Board Chairman Has Connections to Three City Hospitals

Elizabeth, New Jersey Elizabeth native Victor M. Richel has the distinction of being the only person to serve on the Boards of three Elizabeth Hospitals, yet he was born in none of them. The current Chairman of Trinitas Hospital, past Chairman of Alexian Brothers Hospital, and former Finance Committee Chairman of Elizabeth General Medical Center, Mr. Richel greeted this world in a modest maternity home on Wyoming Avenue.

“Few people had even heard of Mrs. Quinn’s Maternity Hospital, so you can imagine my shock when I met someone on a plane in California who was born there two days before me! Mrs. Quinn’s home was a place where women could deliver their babies and then recover for several weeks. This gentleman and I were there at the same time,” Mr. Richel explains.

Forty years later, following a promising start in careers in both banking and utilities, a close friend approached Mr. Richel, suggesting he become involved on the Board of Alexian Brothers Hospital in Elizabeth. “Sid Lessner, of Lessner Electric, told me the Brothers really had need of younger people to help on the Board. I was glad to help, plus I was familiar with that hospital since my wife’s uncle, Dr. Joseph Lepree, served as chief of staff there and at St. Elizabeth Hospital.”

He soon found that he had arrived at a time of great change and turmoil. “After serving for four years, I was elected Chairman. Soon after that we learned that the Alexian Order in Chicago was divesting some of their hospitals in New Jersey and California. It was a very difficult decision for them, but they had trouble managing these hospitals because of their distance from Chicago,” he explained.

“The Brothers had a long, successful history in Elizabeth going back to 1891, so it was a hard thing for them to do,” he explained. Elizabeth General Medical Center entered into negotiations with The Alexian Brothers of Elizabeth to acquire them in 1990.

“The acquisition worked because the style of both hospitals was similar. The integration of the former Alexian employees into the General was smooth, and the General’s employees treated them with a lot of respect. Also, it was gratifying to see the legacy of the Brothers continue through the Brother Bonaventure Extended Care Center, which was named after one of the Brothers.”

Following the acquisition, then CEO George Billington asked him to join the Elizabeth General Medical Center Board. “It seemed like I had just settled in when the merger of Elizabeth General and St. Elizabeth Hospital loomed!,” he laughed.

The consolidation that gave birth to Trinitas Hospital in 2000 was “much different,” according to Mr. Richel. “The Brothers were in a weakened condition and had made the decision to divest the Elizabeth hospital. However, with the Trinitas merger, both the General and Saint Elizabeth Hospital brought unique strengths. Both were good working hospitals, and together they created something even stronger and more viable.”

“With the Trinitas Hospital merger, we created a unique model that others should replicate. We took a non-sectarian and a Catholic hospital, got the approval of Rome, and merged the two into a viable organization,” he explained. He calls the ongoing partnership between the Sisters of Charity (sponsors of Trinitas Hospital and the former St. Elizabeth Hospital) and Elizabethtown Healthcare Foundation (the former parent organization of Elizabeth General Medical Center), “very strong and productive. Both the General and the Saints live on in Trinitas, and they play a very significant role at the top of Trinitas’ governing structure,” he said, adding, “I’m especially proud that we named it Trinitas, which not only reflects the Holy Trinity, but also pays tribute to the three hospitals that served the community.”

Mr. Richel states that he is also very proud of the progress that Trinitas Hospital has made in a relatively short amount of time. He stated, “We have an excellent CEO in Gary Horan. He has put us on the map and we are well on our way to becoming a true regional leader in healthcare. We have great people, great leadership and wonderful Centers of Excellence.”

Mr. Richel also serves as Chairman of the Board of Union County College, a post he has held for the last 15 years. During that time, Union County College has developed into one of the nation’s leading community colleges. He explained, “One of the best parts of the College is the cooperative program that it conducts with the Trinitas School of Nursing,” which he describes as a “very important part of the mission of both the College and Hospital.”

With an enrollment nearing 2,000 students, the Trinitas School of Nursing is currently the sixth largest nursing school in the United States – and still growing. The School will occupy an entire floor of Union County College’s new education building that is currently under construction at the College’s Elizabeth Campus.

Mr. Richel and his wife, Andrea, have been married for 45 years. “Andrea has such a rich history of knowledge, experience and enthusiasm – she’s a true partner in everything I do.” The Richels, their three children and eight grandchildren all live in Berkeley Heights.

“It is an honor to serve the community and to give back. Andrea and I have been very fortunate. We know where we came from, and we believe that we have a responsibility to volunteer our time and treasure to help others,” he said, adding, “For us, it’s a true labor of love.”



The only person to serve on three Elizabeth hospital Boards, Victor M. Richel is now the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Trinitas Hospital.

##

About Trinitas Hospital

Trinitas Hospital is a major center for comprehensive health services for those who live and work in Central New Jersey. Offering 531 beds, Trinitas is distinguished by no less than ten Centers of Excellence, which include: the Trinitas Comprehensive Cancer Center; the Trinitas School of Nursing; the Center for Wound Healing & Hyperbaric Medicine; the Sleep Disorders Center; cardiology services, maternal/child health services; diabetes management; women's services, renal care; behavioral health services, and senior services. The Department of Behavioral Health & Psychiatry offers one of the most comprehensive services in the state for the psychiatric treatment of children and adults. Trinitas serves as the Center for End-Stage Renal Care for Eastern Union County. Trinitas is a Catholic teaching hospital sponsored by the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth in partnership with Elizabethtown Healthcare Foundation. For more information on Trinitas Hospital visit: www.TrinitasHospital.org or call (908) 994-5138.