

Phantoms Owners Offer PPL Center to LVHN as Potential Option
If Needed During Coronavirus Outbreak

Lehigh Valley, Pa. (April 10, 2020) – Lehigh Valley Phantoms owners Jim and Rob Brooks are offering the PPL Center in downtown Allentown for use by Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN) as a possible surge facility to care for patients, if necessary, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Brooks said the arena is available as it currently is not hosting events because of the directive last month from Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf that nonessential businesses should close and that communities across the state should social distance and stay at home due to the coronavirus outbreak.

In addition, the American Hockey League along with most professional sports leagues suspended play in March and remains idle for safety reasons. PPL Center is the home arena of the Phantoms hockey team, the top minor league affiliate of the National Hockey League's Philadelphia Flyers.

“We have been extremely impressed with the leadership at LVHN and how they have quickly prepared and acted in this time of need,” Rob Brooks said. “We are also enormously grateful to all of the employees at LVHN, first responders and all the front-line heroes who have put our community first. They truly inspire us with their courage.”

Brian Nester, DO, MBA, FACOEP, LVHN's President and Chief Executive Officer, praised the Brooks brothers for their gracious offer and indicated he's hopeful LVHN and the community do not face a situation where this contingency plan is activated.

“This incredible gesture by Jim and Rob Brooks is just another example of the amazing support the community has demonstrated for LVHN and our physicians, nurses and staff during this difficult time period,” Nester said. “It shows how our community comes together in times of need. While we are far from moving beyond the devastating impact of COVID-19, I believe as of today with the pre-planning we did at LVHN and the round-the-clock hard work and incredible care that continues to go on at all of our hospital campuses, we will be able to weather this storm without taking the dramatic step of turning the arena into a hospital.”

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Nester said it is good to know the PPL Center option exists if such a move became necessary. He said while that is highly unlikely, it's prudent to plan ahead as the health network has done for weeks. He said LVHN planners have looked at the arena as part of that planning and only in a worst-case scenario would consider caring for low-level acuity, non-COVID patients there.

“At LVHN we have a world-class infectious diseases team that with the support of our other caregivers has steered our community through other threats like SARS, Ebola and even seasonal influenza, for which we operate one of the most highly organized and successful drive-thru vaccination campaigns you'll find anywhere. At this point, I want to assure our community that we believe we have the hospital space, equipment and staff to handle their needs during the COVID crisis,” Nester said. “We are grateful the Brooks family came to us with their generous offer. People have asked if there is a plan to surge capacity and there is. This gives us a great asset to include in our plans in the very unlikely event it is needed.”

Lehigh Valley Health Network includes eight hospital campuses, three in Allentown, one in Bethlehem, one in East Stroudsburg, one in Hazleton and two in Pottsville, Pa.; Coordinated Health, which includes two hospital campuses, nearly two dozen multispecialty locations including ambulatory surgery centers and orthopedic injury centers in northeastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey; 26 health centers; numerous primary and specialty care physician practices; 22 ExpressCARE locations including the area's only Children's ExpressCARE; pharmacy, imaging, home health, rehabilitation and lab services; and preferred provider services through Valley Preferred. Specialty care includes: trauma care for adults and children, burn care at the Regional Burn Center; kidney and pancreas transplants; perinatal/neonatal, cardiac, cancer, orthopedics, neurology, complex neurosurgery capabilities including national certification as a Comprehensive Stroke Center, and robotic surgery in 10 specialties. Lehigh Valley Cancer Institute, Lehigh Valley Heart Institute and Lehigh Valley Institute for Surgical Excellence physicians provide the most advanced treatments. Lehigh Valley Cancer Institute is a member of the Memorial Sloan Kettering (MSK) Cancer Alliance, an initiative that helps community providers improve the quality of cancer care and offers access to MSK clinical trials. Lehigh Valley Reilly Children's Hospital, the community's only children's hospital, provides care in more than 30 specialties and general pediatrics. Lehigh Valley Hospital–Cedar Crest is the region's only hospital nationally ranked by U.S. News & World Report for orthopedics and has been recognized among Pennsylvania's top five hospitals for six consecutive years. Lehigh Valley Hospital (LVH)–Cedar Crest, LVH–17th Street and LVH–Muhlenberg are the region's only Magnet® hospitals for nursing excellence. Additional information is available by visiting LVHN.org, or following us on Facebook and Twitter.

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