

## **Benesse Healing Gardens set to open, unique facility expected to promote patient outcomes**

*Environmental factors improve stress management*

SHELBYVILLE, IN – Positively managing stress associated with illness often improves patient outcomes, and the new 40,500 sq. ft. healing gardens at the Benesse Oncology Center are directed to help achieve that, according to Angela Gill, executive director of the Major Hospital Foundation.

“Over the past 25 years a considerable amount of medical research has demonstrated that patients in or with access to psychologically supportive environments often experience improved clinical outcomes, which represents the critical reason we built the Benesse Healing Gardens,” Gill explained.

Under construction since the summer of 2008, the healing gardens will officially open on June 23 with a symbolic ribbon cutting by Shelby County officials and administrators and supporters from Major Health Partners.

With five calming water features and a number of separate areas promoting meditation and privacy, the nearly one-acre Benesse Healing Gardens is the largest hospital-related facility of its kind in central Indiana. The \$600,000 facility, funded by private donors in the region, can be easily accessed directly from treatment facilities in the Benesse Oncology Center in the Intelliplex park.

The elaborate gardens include a butterfly sensory garden to attract butterflies and hummingbirds, a spiritual garden modeled after a Native American “Kiva Pit,” and an artistic labyrinth that promotes symbolic self-discovery and introspection.

Concepts for the Benesse Healing Gardens were first produced by landscape and architectural students from Purdue University. Supporters of the Major Hospital Foundation and Gill then worked with Becker Landscape professionals in Indianapolis to finish the design and select special plants and trees for the ADA-accessible gardens.

“While all significant illnesses have their own degree of associated stress, patients fighting cancer have unique needs,” said Gill. When the Benesse Oncology Center, a Major Health Partner, was

opened in 2008, it featured a unique ceiling-to-floor window system that allows patients undergoing chemotherapy to view or access the healing gardens directly.

“This direct access reflects research conducted by Johns Hopkins medical researchers, Texas A&M University and elsewhere that demonstrates how patients with an outdoor view tended to recover more rapidly,” Gill continued.

As the British medical journal *The Lancet* reported a few years ago about healing environments: “Evidenced-based design is poised to emulate evidenced-based medicine as a central tenet for healthcare in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

“The forward-looking and recovery-focused environment at the Benesse Healing Gardens is a natural and progressive complement to the superb cancer treatment offered at the Benesse Oncology Center,” said Jack Horner, president and CEO of Major Health Partners.

Major Health Partners and Major Hospital matched a number of private gifts to help build the gardens.

The “Snail Garden,” a small water-themed section of the garden (named in memory of Gail Gibson, whose nickname was “snail”), was built first, directly next to the polarized windows in the Benesse treatment area (which allows patients to look out, but protects their privacy while undergoing chemotherapy).

“The healing gardens are a real gift to the community from supporters of the Major Foundation,” said Steve Hastings with Becker Landscape. “It will be a private gathering place for patients, families and friends and help them deal with stress naturally produced in recovering from cancer.”

Gill pointed out that the healing gardens were designed to be used year-round, with special attention to evergreen placement and selection of colorful winter-related plants and trees such as Staghorn Sumacs.

The Benesse Healing Gardens include the following innovative features:

- Five separate water treatments, from open springs to an open runnel with water bubbling across set stones
- A Spiritual Garden, which features a Native American-styled Kiva Pit in a sunken area with seating
- A Sensory Garden with special butterfly-attracting plants and flowing water springs
- A figurative labyrinth area with a large polished stone at the center to symbolize self-discovery
- A leaf patio, with hand-cut patterns of autumn leaves sealed in textured concrete

- A Meditation Garden with features tall bushes and trees to provide a shady and restful environment promoting privacy

The Benesse Healing Gardens are open to the public. Gifts for expansion and maintenance of the extensive facility are welcomed, according to Gill.

### ***About Major Hospital and Major Health Partners***

*Major Hospital, a Major Health Partner, is the primary healthcare provider for Shelby County (Indiana) and serves patients and families throughout southeast Indiana through the hospital and its vertical practice groups in Major Health Partners. Founded in 1924, Major Hospital has served as regional leader. Major Health Partners successfully delivers a wide spectrum of healthcare services, including treatment at the Benesse Oncology Center and the reNovo Orthopaedic Center. As documented by the national independent Press Ganey ranking service, Major Hospital was recently named of America's "Top 100 Hospitals" by Thomson-Reuters and currently enjoys a top ranking for inpatient satisfaction in central Indiana. It has also secured a national reputation as one the nation's leading hospitals in health informatics. For more information, please visit [www.majorhp.org](http://www.majorhp.org).*