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Boston University
MEDIA ADVISORY

COLLEAGUES AND COMMUNITY HONOR A FRIEND OF THE ELDERLY

Boston, Mass.—For her tireless service to the homebound and homeless elderly of Boston, colleagues and friends of Anna Bissonnette, associate director of the University Hospital's (UH) Home Medical Service, will surprise her with a 20-year anniversary party. Members of the media are invited to the festivities at 3 p.m., Monday, September 18, 720 Harrison Avenue.

A former nun who went on to become a nurse specializing in the care of the frail elderly, Bissonnette already had a profound understanding of the needs of that population when she arrived at UH's Home Medical Service (HMS) in 1969. HMS is the oldest program in the country that provides medical care to low-income elders in their homes. She became associate director in 1971 and in 1988 became the first and only nurse to be appointed a professor at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM).

Over the years Bissonnette has served as the heart and soul of HMS both on the outside with the community and on the inside with colleagues. "Anna, more than anyone else, is responsible for the good relationship we have with the community at large and with leaders of other community agencies," says George Rosenthal, M.D., of the HMS. "And, she is the person we all go to when we have personal or professional problems--she is never too busy or too tired to care or help."

As assistant director of HMS, Bissonnette supervises medical students, who, along with physicians from UH and BUSM, provide much of the care to
the elderly served by HMS. She also teaches medical students about community health and public service, often inspiring them to do volunteer work in addition to their medical training.

Believing that quality health care means little to a person who doesn't have a home, Bissonnette has been the driving force behind HMS's involvement in a nationwide program called Living at Home that offers homeless elderly temporary emergency housing, medical care and housing advocacy.

Her dedication to her patients extends beyond the boundaries of the institution. "Anna is always working with the community to make sure someone somewhere is fulfilling the needs of her elderly patients," says Rosenthal. In her mind, there is no room for competition where the needs of the elderly are concerned."

And, her commitment is more than professional. "Anna has been known to rescue homeless elders on her way home from work or on weekends," says Rosenthal.

More than a hundred community leaders and colleagues will be there to honor her on September 18.

The University Hospital, founded in 1855, is a principal teaching hospital of Boston University School of Medicine and a member of Boston University Medical Center.