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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Early Detection is Year-round Priority at Plumas District Hospital

QUINCY, CA, SEPTEMBER 20, 2011- The heralds of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month are here - pink awareness ribbons. They help remind us of the importance of early detection and regular mammograms - and they are everywhere - from store shelves to TV commercials, even appearing on NFL player uniforms and rodeo cowboys.

Yet despite all the pink ribbons, sobering figures released from the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month program indicate that there are still women who do not take advantage of early detection at all and others who do not get screening mammograms and clinical breast exams at regular intervals.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women 40 and older should have a screening mammogram every year and should continue to do so for as long as they are in good health. In addition, it is recommended that women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam as part of a regular health exam by a healthcare provider, at least every 3 years. After age 40, women should have a breast exam by a healthcare provider every year.

In today's world of high unemployment and soaring health insurance costs, an annual clinical breast exam and/or screening mammogram may seem out of reach for some women.

According to the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month program, women aged 65 and older are less likely to get mammograms than younger women, even though breast cancer risk increases with age. Hispanic, American Indian or native Alaskan women are also less likely. Women whose monthly household incomes fall below a certain level (\$1805 or less for a household of one and \$2429 or less for a household of two) are less likely than women at higher incomes to have had a mammogram within the past two years.

Plumas District Hospital can help women who find themselves either with no insurance coverage or have medical insurance with a high deductible or does not cover breast cancer screening.

In these cases, PDH can provide free breast cancer screening services through the *Every Woman Counts* program. Qualified women are eligible for annual clinical breast exams and mammograms at no cost. Follow-up services and additional imaging (excluding MRI) are also covered if necessary to achieve a final diagnosis. The program also provides free pelvic exams and Pap tests.

Research has not discovered how to prevent a woman from getting breast cancer, but if it is found early enough, most women can survive. Many facilities offer incentives during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, but early detection is a year-round priority at Plumas District Hospital. In an effort to encourage every woman to schedule her annual screening mammogram, PDH will offer a bone-density screening (Dexa scan) for only \$25, to any woman who has her mammogram performed at the Quincy-based facility in the next twelve months.

Plumas District Hospital was an early adopter of mammography services. In 1981, PDH became the first rural hospital in California to provide mammography services with the introduction of Xero Mammography. Just a few years later, in 1987, PDH installed newer technology, a low-dose system. Since then the hospital has continued to upgrade mammography equipment on a regular basis to continue to offer comprehensive services.

Also, in the 80s PDH obtained accreditation by the American College of Radiology in mammography; even though such accreditation was not a requirement at that time. The hospital has maintained accreditation ever since, which requires recertification every three years and has consistently passed a yearly mammography inspection by the State of California.

Most recently, the hospital has adopted the Softer Mammogram™ program – disposable, soft, foam pads which make the mammogram a lot more comfortable but do not compromise the quality of the image.

Remember, the best protection is early detection. A breast exam could save your life. Please call 283-5640 to schedule your breast exam or to find out more about the *Every Woman Counts* program today.