



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

For more information contact:

*Ben Roberts*

*Director, Public Relations & Communications*

*O: 229-312-5180*

*C: 229-343-7499*

[benroberts@phoebhealth.com](mailto:benroberts@phoebhealth.com)

### **Georgia Southwestern Athletes Deliver 1,600 Teddy Bears to Phoebe**

**Americus, Ga.** – Athletes from Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) hauled a literal truckload of stuffed animals onto the campus of Phoebe Sumter Medical Center Monday afternoon following the university's second Teddy Bear Toss.

"We're always looking for ways to give back to the community. Phoebe is so generous with us. They've made a large commitment to our athletics department and our university in general. So, this was just one way that we could easily give back," said Nicole Levering, GSW's Head Softball Coach and Assistant Athletic Director.

At a recent men's basketball game, fans were asked to bring stuffed animals to the GSW Storm Dome, the Hurricanes home arena. When the Canes scored their first basket, everyone threw the toys onto the court. The game was briefly stopped so volunteers could collect the nearly 1,600 stuffed animals, a 33% increase over last year's collection.

"We have ten different sports, and we had athletes from every team participate. The teams were super enthusiastic about this, and the coaches really got behind it as well. We're trying to get more of the university involved, too. We did have several other departments – the education department, the nursing department – they stepped up and helped us as well," Levering said.

The teddy bears will be used to calm fears and bring smiles to the faces of Phoebe's youngest patients and their families. Not only will they be handed out at Phoebe Sumter to newborns, young patients in the emergency room and patients in the outpatient pediatrics clinic, the toys will also be distributed on Phoebe's main campus for use in the ER, NICU and pediatrics unit. Through Phoebe's Network of Trust, some of the stuffed animals will also be given to partner agencies that serve children in crisis.

"Georgia Southwestern really is a jewel in our community. We're so fortunate to have a university of that caliber in Americus, and I am grateful that Phoebe has such a close partnership with them," said Carlyle Walton, Phoebe Sumter Medical Center CEO. "It was exciting for me personally to attend the teddy bear toss, and I know our teams at Phoebe

Sumter and throughout our health system are so appreciative of what this generous project will mean to our young patients.”

The GSW Athletics Department is already looking forward to a third Teddy Bear Toss next season, when they hope to collect at least 2,000 stuffed animals.

“We know there is a need for it, and it’s just a great event. It’s also a good way to bring the community together, so we’re going to keep it up,” Levering said.

###

**EDITOR’S NOTE: Attached photos GSW athletes delivering stuffed animals to Phoebe Sumter.**



