

## The Braff Group Honored as a Double Finalist for Healthcare Deal of the Year and as a Finalist for Investment Banking Firm of the Year

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*The M&A Advisor*, a leading publication dedicated to middle market merger and acquisition activity recently announced the finalists for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual M&A Advisor Awards.

The Braff Group, a leading middle market health care merger and acquisition firm, was named as a double finalist for Healthcare Deal of the Year for its representation of VitalAire, the US Homecare division of Air Liquide Health Care America in its divestiture to Apria Health Care Group and for the firm's representation of Northwestern Memorial Home Health Care in its simultaneous divestiture of its Home Health Care operations to TLC Health Care Services and its Home Infusion Therapy Operations to Option Care, Inc. Other finalists include Extencare Healthcare Services, Inc.'s acquisition of Assisted Living Concepts, Inc., IHHI's acquisition of four Hospitals, and Psychiatric Solutions, Inc.'s acquisition of Behavioral Health Care Assets from Ardent Health Services LLC.

This marks the second consecutive year that The Braff Group (TBG) has been so honored. In 2004, the firm was awarded the Life Sciences (Biotech/Healthcare) Deal of the Year for its representation of LifePlus, a regional home care provider based in Raymond, NH. This is also the second consecutive year that Bob Leonard, TBG Managing Director, Home Medical Equipment, has had a transaction among the Healthcare M&A finalists. In addition to representing LifePlus in 2004, Mr. Leonard headed the deal team representing VitalAire in 2005. The deal team representing Northwestern Memorial Home Health Care was led by Chuck Gaetano, TBG Managing Director, Infusion Therapy, Specialty Pharmacy, and Home Medical Equipment and Steven Braff, TBG Managing Director, Home Health Care, Hospice, Home Medical Equipment and Staffing. Rounding out the team providing financial and analytical support in both transactions were Business Analysts Sandy Stuhfire and John Hickey.

In addition to having two transactions up for Healthcare Deal of the Year, The Braff Group was also named as a finalist for Investment Banking Firm of the Year. Other finalists include Houlihan Lokey Howard & Zukin, Harris Williams & Company, Financial Technology Partners LLC, and Global M&A.

"We are delighted to be recognized alongside some of the best and brightest middle market merger and acquisition firms in the nation" commented Dexter W. Braff, President of The Braff Group. "It is a testament to the shared vision of everyone at the firm – to provide the most comprehensive M&A advisory services to our clients, with unflinching integrity, and to continue to seek out ways to improve our performance year in and year out".

The awards will be held at a black-tie event December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at the New York Athletic Club in New York City.

### About The Braff Group

The Braff Group is a leading middle market merger and acquisition firm that specializes in the home medical equipment, home health care, hospice, staffing, specialty pharmacy, infusion therapy, and eHealthcare market sectors. The firm provides merger and acquisition representation, strategic planning, and valuation services. In addition to being recognized as one of the Pittsburgh Region's fastest growing firms two years running, The Braff Group was awarded the 2004 Life Sciences (Biotech/Healthcare) Deal of the Year by the M&A Advisor, a leading publication dedicated to middle market merger and acquisition activity, for our representation of LifePlus, a regional home care provider based in Raymond, NH.

### About the M&A Advisor

The M&A Advisor is a newsletter, website, and conference publisher delivering services that provide executives, M&A professionals, and others about the intricate world of buying and selling middle market companies. The company's

products include *The M&A Advisor* monthly newsletter; The M&A Advisor Online (<http://www.maadvisor.com>); The M&A Advisor Conference series (<http://www.maadvisor.com/conference>); The M&A ALERTS e-zine; special reports, software, and publications; and consulting services.

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