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Families with Babies in Intensive Care Benefit from New Project March of Dimes partners with Stormont-Vail to implement support program

(TOPEKA, Nov. 3, 2009) - The March of Dimes and Stormont-Vail HealthCare will kick off Prematurity Awareness Month Nov. 3 with the launch of NICU Family Support. March of Dimes NICU Family Support provides information and comfort to families of premature babies and other critically ill newborns being cared for in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

At 2 p.m. Nov. 3, the media was invited to attend the announcement of the NICU Family Support Program at Stormont-Vail HealthCare. November, Prematurity Awareness Month, is when the March of Dimes focuses the nation's attention on the impact premature birth has on babies and families. More than half a million babies are born prematurely in the United States each year.

"Preparing for a new baby is a time of great excitement," said Nicki Bradbury, director of Stormont-Vail Neonatal IntensiveCare. "Families don't expect anything to go wrong, but about one in 10 newborns wind up in a NICU because they are born too soon, too small or with a birth defect. The experience can be overwhelming for families. NICU Family Support aims to make the journey through newborn intensive care smoother and less traumatic for families."

The project is an important component of the March of Dimes efforts to help all babies—those born healthy and those who need help to survive and thrive. As part of its commitment to help give every baby a healthy start, the March of Dimes has made medical and technological advances that have saved millions of babies' lives and health.

It is estimated that 10 percent of all newborns require some level of intensive care. In 2008, 524 newborns were admitted to the Stormont-Vail NIC, some for hours and some for months.

NICU Family Support is established in every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. More than 50,000 families will have access to the information and support activities offered through the March of Dimes NICU Family Support annually.

"The March of Dimes selected Stormont-Vail as its partner for NICU Family Support because of its reputa-

tion for excellence and the quality care it provides to babies,” said Diane Daldrup, State Director of Program Services for the March of Dimes Greater Kansas Chapter. “Stormont-Vail does incredible work every day to care for sick babies and their families. We want to support their efforts.”

“We are excited to have been chosen as a March of Dimes Neonatal Intensive Care Family Support site and are looking forward to this collaborative effort to support parents throughout their stay with us,” said Maynard Oliverius, president and chief executive officer of Stormont-Vail HealthCare.

Incorporating NICU families into every level of the project, March of Dimes NICU Family Support addresses the needs of families throughout the hospitalization, during the transition home, and in the event of a newborn death. NICU Family Support also includes a professional development component to provide hospital NICU staff with support and educational opportunities. An advisory committee made up of graduate NICU parents and NICU professionals are involved in selecting activities and providing direct services to current NICU families. Each NICU family receives a March of Dimes Parent Care Kit including informational books and materials to chart their baby’s milestones.

Stormont-Vail HealthCare is an integrated health care system serving a 13-county area in northeast Kansas. Stormont-Vail HealthCare was formed with the merger of Stormont-Vail Regional Health Center and Cotton-O’Neil Clinic in 1995. PediatricCare joined the system in 1996. Cotton-O’Neil Clinic consists of more than 195 primary care and specialty physicians working together to provide exceptional care throughout the region.

The March of Dimes is the leading non-profit organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide and its premier event, March for Babies, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org.

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