

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**April 12, 2018**

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Sisters Hospital Dedicates New Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

On April 12, Catholic Health and Sisters of Charity Hospital will usher in a new era in neonatal care with the dedication of its new \$8.8 million Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Doubling the number of available bassinets from 20 to 40, the new 21,000 square-foot NICU will replace the existing 8,000 square-foot unit, which opened in 2001 and has outgrown its physical space.

As Buffalo's first hospital, established in 1848 by the Daughters of Charity, Sisters Hospital has been a leader in mother-baby care for generations. As Western New York's busiest maternity hospital, with 3,500 births in 2017, the new NICU will enable Sisters Hospital to provide high level care to babies born prematurely or with other neonatal medical conditions, while offering their families greater comfort and convenience. As a designated Level III NICU, the unit is staffed and equipped to care for infants as young as 23 weeks (micro-preemies), multiple births, and other babies with special needs.

"By relocating the NICU to the hospital's second floor, adjacent to our Mother-Baby unit, we have created one central location to continue this legacy of high quality, family-centered care for the growing number of families who choose to deliver their babies at Sisters Hospital," said Martin Boryszak, President & CEO of Sisters Hospital.

This growth translates into more babies needing care in the hospital's NICU. Nearly three times the size of the current NICU, the new unit features the latest in neonatal medical equipment housed in a warm, "family-centered" atmosphere.

"When we set out to design this new unit, we wanted it to be a place where families could feel comfortable and be involved in the care of their babies," said Dr. Robert Dukarm, Chief of Neonatology for Catholic Health. "The unit features more private rooms, with dedicated rooms for twins and triplets, giving families more space, privacy and comfort to support their babies' special needs."

Sisters Hospital Foundation launched a capital campaign in 2016, raising more than \$2.3 million to support the NICU project. "The Foundation is pleased to be able to support such a worthwhile project that impacts the lives of hundreds of babies and families throughout our community each year," said Michael Lawley, who along with his wife Kirsten and Michael and Gwen Appelbaum, served as co-chairman of the fundraising effort. "It is truly a place where miracles happen each day and we are grateful to all the generous donors who helped exceed our expectations for this campaign."

In addition to expanded space for clinical services, the unit, designed by Kidney Architects, with Picone Construction serving as general contractor, includes dedicated space for physician and staff offices, support services, education and resource rooms, and unique family support areas. Members of hospital's multidisciplinary NICU care team, including neonatologists; registered nurses; physical, occupational and respiratory therapists; and other clinical and support staff; along with NICU families, were actively involved in the design of the new unit, which features:

- Expanded capacity from 20 to 40 bassinets.
- New single-family rooms designed to enhance individualized care, including special rooms to accommodate twins and triplets.
- Special lighting and sound controls to create a soothing environment for delicate preemies.
- State-of-the-art infection control features to keep tiny babies safe from the tiniest germs.
- In-room conveniences, including specially-designed infant "bathing sinks" and personal refrigeration units to store breast milk.
- Dedicated "Family Only" spaces to keep loved ones nearby.

"We can't thank our NICU team enough for their patience, cooperation and invaluable input throughout this project, and most importantly, for the expert and compassionate care they provide our tiniest patients every day," Boryszak continued. "We would also like to thank all our generous donors for their support of this project, and lastly, the thousands of families who put their trust in the care we provide."

The NICU was unveiled to the general public during a dedication ceremony held at the hospital today. Bishop Richard Malone, Bishop of Buffalo, was on hand to bless the new facility. Members of the medical community and area social service agencies toured the unit yesterday. Staff will begin transitioning babies into the new nursery on April 24.

The new NICU at Sisters Hospital compliments the ongoing growth of maternity services within Catholic Health, which also includes Mercy Hospital of Buffalo and Mount St. Mary's Hospital in Lewiston. Mount St. Mary's houses the Center for Women, a comprehensive women's health center serving women throughout Niagara County. Mercy Hospital offers a Level II NICU, and like Sisters offers intensive care for high risk mothers and babies under one roof.

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