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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**March of Dimes Awards Grant to St. John's Children's Hospital  
in order to Improve the Health of Mothers and Babies in Central Illinois**

(SPRINGFIELD, IL, MARCH 22, 2007)— The March of Dimes Illinois Chapter has awarded a \$10,000 grant to the Springfield Perinatal Center at St. John's Children's Hospital to provide outreach services to families of babies cared for by the hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The grant will allow the Center's NICU Developmental Continuity Follow-up Clinic to serve more infants. Currently, the clinic evaluates 400 infants at 6, 12, 18, and 24 months.

Southern Illinois University School of Medicine and St. John's Hospital staff the clinic every Tuesday morning. The grant provides funds for a parent education liaison and a psychologist and will allow the clinic to evaluate more children. Also, the Sangamon County Department of Public Health's 0-3 Child and Family Connection staff is now on site during the clinic.

This grant is one of many that the March of Dimes awards in pursuit of its mission to prevent birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

"We award March of Dimes grants to seed new projects or expand others that are consistent with our objective to provide families with resources to ensure the birth of healthy babies," said Cynthia Barnes Boyd, Director, UIC Neighborhoods Initiative, Volunteer Chair of the March of Dimes Illinois Chapter Community Service Grants Program. "We are grateful to those volunteers who support the March of Dimes by participation in events like WalkAmerica and who donate in other ways. Their participation and generous donations make it possible for the March of Dimes to invest in innovative community programs designed to improve birth outcomes and reduce disparities among some groups." she said.

The Springfield Perinatal Center cares for women experiencing high-risk pregnancies and their babies throughout a 34-county area in central Illinois. The Center provides patient services, education for healthcare professionals and early intervention agencies, and outcome evaluations for hospitals in the region.

"This clinic is extremely important as we closely follow development of at-risk children and get them into the right therapy as soon as possible to minimize any disability they may have," said Dr. Dennis T. Crouse, professor of pediatrics at SIU School of Medicine, director of the NICU and co-director of the Springfield Perinatal Center. "The medical team and the family work together to optimize the outcome

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for each child, so I'm very proud of all those involved, including the staff of St. John's pediatric rehabilitation services and Dr. Glen Aylward who directs SIU's Center for Disorders in Development and Learning."

The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education, and advocacy to save babies. In 2003, it launched a campaign to address the increasing rate of premature birth. For more information, visit the March of Dimes Web site at [marchofdimes.com](http://marchofdimes.com) or its Spanish language Web site at [nacersano.org](http://nacersano.org).

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