

**2009 Scotties Tournament of Hearts fundraising activities to benefit
the Victoria Hospitals Foundation in support of the
Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria General Hospital**

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For Immediate Release

Victoria, BC –The Victoria Hospitals Foundation is very honoured to have been named the charity of choice for the fundraising activities planned for the upcoming 2009 Scotties Tournament of Hearts (February 21 - March 1) to purchase specialty neonatal medical equipment.

The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Victoria General Hospital will directly benefit from the generous support of the Sandra Schmirler Foundation, which works in partnership with the Scotties tournament to raise funds for NICU facilities across Canada.

The Sandra Schmirler Foundation was created as a legacy to three-time world curling champion and Olympic gold medalist Sandra Schmirler, in recognition and celebration of her love of family. The Foundation's mission is "caring for babies in crisis". The Foundation recognizes that babies needing special medical attention have the same will to live that fuelled Sandra's battle with cancer.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with the Sandra Schmirler Foundation and the 2009 Scotties Tournament of Hearts. Nearly 500 babies receive care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria General Hospital every year," said Brian Sinclair, Chief of Pediatrics at Victoria General Hospital. "As one of the Tertiary Referral Centers for the province, the Victoria General Hospital NICU provides comprehensive, complex care to infants from all over Vancouver Island as well as from elsewhere in BC."

The NICU at the Victoria General Hospital specializes in care for newborn babies who need intensive medical attention, such as babies who are premature, have low birth weight or have a medical condition that requires special care. The NICU combines advanced technology and trained healthcare professionals to provide specialized care for our tiniest patients.

At the 2009 Tournament of Hearts the Sandra Schmirler Foundation will run two major fundraising events:

- Sunday, February 22: Telethon to be broadcast by TSN
- Saturday, February 28: A Crowd Sweep (a 'pass the hat' giving opportunity)

"The neonatal intensive care unit at the Victoria General Hospital provides babies with the opportunity to grow and reach their full potential which is what the Sandra Schmirler Foundation is all about," explains Francine Poisson, President of the Sandra Schmirler Foundation.

The first Sandra Schmirler Foundation telethon was held in Brandon Manitoba in 2002. Since then they have raised \$947,341. This year they are fundraising for Fetal Heart Monitors, which cost \$15,000 each.

"We are delighted to announce that the charity of choice for the 2009 Scotties Tournament of Hearts in affiliation with the Sandra Schmirler Foundation is the Victoria Hospitals Foundation. In both 2007 and 2008, the Sandra Schmirler Foundation donated \$12,000 to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Victoria General Hospital. This year our goal is to raise funds for Fetal Heart Monitors, which will aid in helping premature babies through some of the challenges of their early days," says Francine Poisson.

About the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria General Hospital

- Most babies admitted to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria General Hospital are premature (born before 37 weeks of pregnancy), have low birth weight (less than 5.5 pounds), or have a medical condition that requires special care.
- Babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit need continuous observation and monitoring, intensive nursing, and sometimes life-supporting care such as breathing assistance. The Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria General Hospital is responsible for newborns who require complex one-to-one care around the clock.
- Over 90 per cent of Vancouver Island children requiring hospital care are treated at Victoria General.
- There are only three Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care Units in British Columbia, including the one at Victoria General Hospital. (The other two are in Vancouver.) A Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit provides the widest variety of advanced care available for all newborns, including surgery.

Ways to support the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

- Call in to the telethon on February 22 at 1-866-972-6372 (1-866-9SANDRA)
- Attend the tournament on Saturday, February 28 and donate during the crowd sweep
- Call the Victoria Hospitals Foundation at 250-414-6688 or donate online at www.victoriahf.ca

About the 2009 Scotties Tournament of Hearts

The 2009 Scotties Tournament of Hearts runs February 21 to March 1 in Victoria at the Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre and will feature Canada's best women curlers competing for the 2009 national title. The tournament will offer a chance to see 2008 Team Canada and the World Women's Curling Champions, Jennifer Jones and her rink from Manitoba, working to defend their national title. For more information please visit www.seasonofchampions.ca/2009toh. For tickets call 250-220-7777 in Victoria or toll-free 1-866-514-5050 or visit <http://selectyourtickets.com/curling>.

About the Victoria Hospitals Foundation:

The Victoria Hospitals Foundation works in partnership with the Vancouver Island Health Authority to enable donations to Vancouver Island's two largest and most comprehensive hospitals: the Royal Jubilee and the Victoria General. The Foundation raises more than \$7 million annually for urgently needed medical equipment and special projects that help these two hospitals provide care to all 752,000 residents of Vancouver Island. Since 1989, the Victoria Hospitals Foundation has raised more than \$64 million to benefit our hospitals. For more information, call the Foundation at 250-414-6688 or go to www.victoriahf.ca.

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