Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Celebrates A Decade of Caring for Good Shepherd Medical Center’s Tiniest Patients

(LONGVIEW, TX – February 21, 2014) – This year, Good Shepherd Medical Center’s Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) proudly marks its tenth anniversary of providing advanced life-saving and compassionate care to over 4,000 of the NICU’s tiniest patients in just a decade.

“In January 2004, Good Shepherd responded to a regional need by opening the first NICU in East Texas,” said Interim Vice President/Chief Nursing Officer Christi Hawkins, Good Shepherd Medical Center. “As we mark this special milestone of service to Longview and the surrounding area, we want to thank our community partners and everyone who has supported us and who continue to trust us to meet the specialized needs of newborns and their families who depend on us for care,” Hawkins added.

Since opening its doors, Good Shepherd’s NICU has nearly doubled in size, from an 18-bed unit to a 31-bed unit, and several physicians and staff members have been a part of the team since the unit’s inception. “On average, our NICU team provides specialized care to approximately 400 infants per year,” said Hawkins. The newborn care team of Good Shepherd’s NICU consists of board-certified neonatologists, neonatal nurse practitioners, specialty certified and trained NICU registered nurses, respiratory, occupational and speech therapists and support staff – all dedicated to their newborn patients and their families.

The Good Shepherd NICU has the ability to care for premature infants born as early as 23 weeks gestation, as well as full-term babies born with special needs, and utilizes a complete range of advanced neonatal equipment and care treatments, including high-frequency ventilation, nitric oxide and induced hypothermia. The NICU infant beds are specially designed to provide safe monitoring and create the stable environment that high-risk infants require.

Good Shepherd also proudly supports the East Texas region with its Neonatal Transport Program. The skilled NICU transport team is available 24 hours a day to accompany critically ill infants born at other area hospitals to Good Shepherd’s NICU.

“Because a NICU baby’s hospital stay can often last for an extended period of time, the Good Shepherd family often becomes part of the baby’s family,” said Hawkins. So a favorite event each year at Good Shepherd Medical Center is the NICU reunion, where the “graduates,” along with their families and the Good Shepherd staff come to together to celebrate and share their stories. This year’s reunion is scheduled for Saturday, March 22nd at the Shopka Center in Longview.

NICU Graduate Record Holders:

- Good Shepherd’s tiniest NICU graduate weighed a mere 15 ounces at birth (the equivalent of a can of vegetables or a bottle of water).
- The earliest arrival of a NICU graduate was 23.1 weeks gestation.
- The largest NICU graduate weighed 16.1½ ounces at birth.

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The longest period time that a graduate was in the NICU was approximately seven months.

For media opportunities with Good Shepherd’s NICU staff, as well as one of the NICU first graduates and his or her family and the family of one of our smallest newborns, contact Erin Hassell at (903) 315-5277 or email ehassell@gsmc.org.

For more information about the NICU services offered at Good Shepherd Medical Center or the NICU Reunion Celebration, contact the Good Shepherd Healthy Hotline at (903) 315-GSHS (4747) or (888) 784-GSHS (4747).

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