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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Mary Bridge and Tacoma General Team Up to Screen for Congenital Heart Defects *Babies born at Tacoma General Hospital to be First in the State Screened before Discharge*

(TACOMA)--Tacoma General Hospital, aided by the Mary Bridge Pediatric Heart Center, is the first hospital in the state to screen for congenital heart defects prior to discharge.

The screenings are part of a study that was launched on Valentine's Day 2008, with Mary Bridge Cardiothoracic Surgeon Ronald K. Woods, M.D., Ph.D. as the principal investigator. The study is supported in part by a grant from the Fraternal Order of the Eagles. The goal of this effort is to diagnose and treat these defects early.

Congenital Heart Defects (CHDs) are defects that are present at birth and affect the structure or function of the heart or vessels. Heart defects affect approximately eight to 10 babies in 1,000 births and are the leading cause of newborn and infant deaths.

CHDs are often diagnosed early, but in some cases, the first sign of a problem is a significant cardiac event. Early detection and early treatment lead to better outcomes through surgery, other cardiac procedures, and even medication. If a baby born at Tacoma General is diagnosed with a CHD, the Mary Bridge Pediatric Heart Center team is available on-site for diagnosis and treatment.

“We are providing parents with an early warning system for their baby, since the signs and symptoms of congenital heart defects can be subtle,” said Dr. Woods. “In addition to their screening prior to discharge, the parents are given information and can watch for signs and symptoms as their child grows. If they know what to look for, they can also catch these problems early.”

The screening lasts about three to five minutes and is performed with a pulse oximeter, which monitors for low oxygen levels in the blood.

“If this simple, painless test helps save the life of one baby, we will have been successful in our efforts,” Dr. Woods added.

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Mary Bridge Children's Hospital and Tacoma General Hospital are part of the MultiCare Health System. **MultiCare** is a leading-edge, integrated health organization made up of four hospitals, numerous primary care and urgent care clinics, multi-specialty centers, Hospice and Home Health services, and many other services. A not-for-profit organization based in Tacoma, Washington since 1882, MultiCare has grown over the years in response to community needs. Today we are the area's largest provider of health care services, serving patients at 93 locations in Pierce, South King, Kitsap and Thurston counties.

INFANTS (up to age 1)

Parents should be alert to the following symptoms in infancy:

- ♥ Tires easily during feeding (i.e., falls asleep before feeding finishes)
- ♥ Sweating around the head, especially during feeding
- ♥ Fast breathing when at rest or sleeping
- ♥ Pale or bluish skin color
- ♥ Poor weight gain
- ♥ Sleeps a lot -- not playful or curious for any length of time
- ♥ Puffy face, hands and/or feet
- ♥ Often irritable, difficult to console

CHILDREN (ages 1-17)

Some children with CHDs may not have any symptoms until later in childhood. Things to look for include:

- ♥ Gets out of breath during play (e.g., crouches or squats to catch breath)
- ♥ Difficulty “keeping up” with playmates
- ♥ Tires easily/sleeps a lot
- ♥ Change in color during active play or sports (looks pale or has a bluish tint around mouth and nose)
- ♥ Frequent colds and respiratory illnesses
- ♥ Slow growth and weight gain/poor appetite
- ♥ Complains of chest pain and/or heart pounding

Source: The Congenital Heart Information Network www.tchin.org