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NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING PROGRAM AT SHARP MARY BIRCH PROVIDES CRUCIAL EARLY DIAGNOSIS

(SAN DIEGO) June 3, 2003 – With as many as four infants for every 1,000 births suffering from permanent hearing impairment, early diagnosis is crucial to prevent or minimize a delay in speech and language development. Research shows that children diagnosed with hearing problems before six months of age are more likely to develop normal speech, language and communication skills. To help combat hearing loss, Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women has implemented a Newborn Hearing Screening program that will test more than 7,000 infants each year.

On Monday, June 9 at 10:30 a.m., there will be a **unique opportunity to view an actual newborn hearing screening at Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women, 3003 Health Center Dr., San Diego**, and interview David and Emma Dircio whose two-month-old son, David, failed the hearing screening at birth and was referred to Children's Hospital for treatment. **(Media check-in at hospital lobby).**

Under the Newborn Hearing Screening program, parents can have their babies screened for hearing loss before leaving the hospital. When initial testing indicates a possible hearing problem, infants are tracked and monitored to ensure appropriate follow-up, treatment, and coordination of educational and other support services. Earlier this year, Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women achieved state certification as a participant in the California Newborn Hearing Screening program, which mandates that all California Children's Services (CCS) approved hospitals offer hearing screenings to newborns.

Cox Communications and Qualcomm will present Sharp Mary Birch with a check for \$35,000 for the purchase of new and improved hearing screening equipment. Over the past two years, Cox Communications and Qualcomm have

partnered to contribute \$200,000 to the Speech and Hearing Center at Children's Hospital for hearing aids and speech therapy for more than 150 children. The \$35,000 donation for the purchase of newborn screening equipment is the next step in the partnership between Cox Communications and Qualcomm.

Using its new Sonamed Clarity System, Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women offers an Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) screening to all well babies, and performs an Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) screening to all infants in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Both screenings use tones or clicks that are played through small earphones. Responses to the sounds are automatically measured and data is collected for submission to the state.

Cox Communications is a full-service telecommunications provider, serving 537,000 customers and 2,400 employees in San Diego County. The company offers an array of services, including Cox Cable, Cox Digital Cable, Cox High Speed Internet, local and long distance telephone through Cox Digital Telephone, Entertainment on Demand, Cox High Definition Cable, and Cox Business Services. The company also owns and operates Channel 4 San Diego, television home of the Padres and award-winning local programming. To date, Cox Communications has deployed more than 70,000 glass miles of fiber optic cable. The nation's fourth-largest cable television company, Cox Communications serves approximately 6.3 million customers nationwide, and has been operating in San Diego County since 1961.

Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women is operated by Sharp HealthCare, a not-for-profit organization with more than 12,000 employees. Sharp is ranked in the top 10 among integrated health care systems by Modern Healthcare magazine and Sharp Mary Birch Hospital for Women was named among the top 10 places in America to have a baby by Fit Pregnancy magazine. The Sharp system includes four acute care hospitals, three specialty hospitals, three medical groups, six urgent care centers, skilled nursing facilities and a variety of other community health programs and services.

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