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## Northridge Hospital Invests for Baby Boom

**UPGRADE:** A \$90 million expansion focuses on neonatal, pediatric care.

**D**ignity Health – Northridge Hospital Medical Center recently spent close to \$90 million on hospital upgrades, primarily in the newborn and pediatric sectors.

“We are serving a diverse community of 2 million people in the San Fernando Valley, which continues to grow,” wrote hospital Chief Executive **Sali-ba Salo** in an email to the Business Journal. “To best meet the needs of our expanding community, we’ve made it our mission to ensure that newborns and children receive quality and compassionate care.”



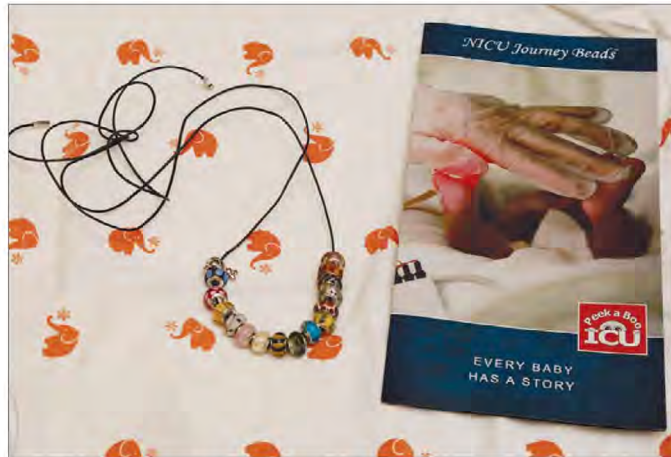
**HEALTH CARE & BIOTECH**

Stephanie Henkel

As part of the renovation, the pediatric intensive care unit

moved to an area almost double the space of the previous unit, and the new labor and delivery wing received 12 new larger patient rooms as well as a new postpartum unit.

However, Northridge Hospital’s newest addition — 10 Giraffe OmniBeds — is located in its new neonatal intensive care unit, which is now more conducive to privacy as it has additional space as well as seven individual rooms and two isolation rooms. The beds are state-of-the-art baby care stations that combine an incubator with a radiant warmer to allow newborn babies with issues like prematurity to heal in an all-inclusive environment.



**Incentive:** Neonatal program features beads to track progress.

To pay for a portion of the Giraffe OmniBeds, the Northridge Hospital Foundation was awarded a \$39,462 grant from the Will Rogers Institute’s Brave Beginnings NICU program. NICU stands for neonatal intensive care unit.

“Overall, somewhere between 10 to 12 percent of babies that are born will have to spend some time in the NICU for some reason or the other,” said **Kim Sanchez**, clinical manager of the new neonatal unit. “But our new surroundings make it a little easier and a little more comfortable (for parents and their babies).”

To reduce the stress neonatal intensive care puts on families, the hospital has implemented the NICU Journey Bead Program, which uses beads to commemorate certain milestones reached during the baby’s stay in the unit.

Custom hand-made Murano glass beads are added to a lanyard to document significant moments like the baby’s first bath, first blood transfusion and discharge from the hospital,

which could take up to four months.

“The program is very well received,” Sanchez said. “Parents enjoy the progression and getting new beads.”

All of these upgrades and services are part of the hospital’s long-term plan to “attract new patients who are looking for these types of services,” said Salo.

Also, Northridge Hospital just completed renovations for its Institute for Living Tower

and recently opened its 12-bed orthopedic and neuroscience unit. Furthermore, the hospital is upgrading all of its nursing units as well as the intensive care unit.

Salo also mentioned that the hospital is currently raising money through its foundation to increase the number of emergency department treatment stations to 45 to keep up with projected demand as a result of the growing population.

### New Board Member

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists has appointed **Curt Widhalm** as one of its newest board members. He will serve as a clinical board director-at-large for the San Diego-based independent professional organization.

Widhalm has been involved with the association since 2006 and has served as chief financial officer as well as past president of the San Fernando Valley Chapter. He has private practices in Encino and West Los

Angeles, where he primarily works with two populations: high-achieving teens and families affected by special needs such as autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

“I became licensed when I was 26,” he said. “Working with teens came a lot more naturally, because of where my age was at the time.”

Some of the organization’s current tasks, which Widhalm helps tackle, are working with the federal government to have marriage and family therapy covered under Medicare and in Veterans Affairs’ hospitals.



**Widhalm**

“I have been working with committees and members of the board for the last couple years,” he said. “It’s been an aspiration of mine since joining to be on the board and to be more involved in policy making and the legislative aspect.”

In addition, Widhalm also co-founded the Clinic for Assessment and Needs of Developmentally Delayed Individuals, a branch of his practice specializing in psychotherapy for people affected by special needs.

“There are so many different directions you can go with an MFT (marriage and family therapist) license,” he said. “It’s about really forging your own path.”

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists has more than 32,000 members statewide, while its San Fernando Valley Chapter has approximately 250 members.

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