

The Virgin Islands Consortium

JFL's Neonatal Unit Receives New Equipment Worth Over \$40,000

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ST. CROIX -- The Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), responsible for infants born prematurely or with problems noted at birth, received two important pieces of equipment that greatly advances its infant care capabilities with modern medical technology.

On Tuesday evening the NICU nurses, who are [extremely dedicated and passionate about their work](#), along with JFL officials, celebrated the installation of the Giraffe Omni Bed and the Panda Warmer Bed.

The Giraffe Omni in particular, which costs over \$40,000, is a state-of-the-art incubator used across the U.S. mainland for premature babies who "need to be kept in a temperature, a light and noise-control environment as they would be inside the womb and continue to develop," said Lisa Allred, head of the NICU department.

Allred said the Giraffe Omni allows the nurses to do everything for the babies without ever having to take them out. "The less moves, the more we can try to recreate the conditions that mom had for the baby in the womb, and that increases growth, " she added.

The Panda Warmer Bed, while less sophisticated, adds the ability to weigh and monitor newborns during the admission and stabilization period. Previously, the babies would have to be taken out of the incubator and placed on a scale to be weighed.

"We're really excited about the beds. Right now, when things are so hard, to have this happen is huge," said RN Nurse Manager Faye John-Baptiste. Indeed, JFL has been faced with financial constraints that's prevented the hospital from acquiring much-needed equipment.

JFL did not receive any donations to purchase the equipment, and the funding, approved by hospital CEO Dr. Kendall Griffith, was made available before the \$7 million [approved](#) by Governor Kenneth Mapp for the facility's Systems Improvement Agreement efforts.

Nurse Joelle Sargeant-Suite, who is on her eleventh year at the NICU, said she felt empowered with the new equipment.

"We've been able to do so much without it and with this we can do so much more. So I'm really excited for me, my co-workers and everyone involved -- the whole community is going to benefit from this," she said.

As noted before, there's a cozy environment at the NICU. The nurses, who care for the babies as if they were their birth parents, operate as a family unit. That dynamic was on display at the small celebration on Tuesday, as they ate, laughed and danced in the lobby area of the NICU, located on the hospital's second floor.

According to statistics provided by JFL, from November 2014 through May 2015, the NICU received 8 intensive care unit babies per month. On average, the gestational age of admitted infants is 35 weeks. The NICU has also received infants ranging from 24-42 weeks gestation, and has cared for infants as small as 500 grams. Average length of stay at the NICU is 11.3 days.