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Media Release

York Central Hospital Family Celebrates Norooz!

Richmond Hill, ON: Norooz in Persian means "New Day." This celebration of the New Year, brings hope, peace and prosperity to the world. Norooz transcends nationality, politics and religion and is celebrated in many countries around the globe such as Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Georgia, Iraq, Tajikistan, Syria, Armenia and India. Norooz begins on the first day of Spring.

Norooz is one of the largest cultural events celebrated by millions of people of Persian heritage in many countries across the globe. York Central Hospital is pleased to celebrate alongside staff, physicians and volunteers. Organized and funded by staff and physicians of Persian descent, this event allows members of the York Central Hospital team to share in this celebration with their colleagues, our patients and visitors. This year marks 1388 on the Persian calendar.

Jackie Samimi is a Patient Relations Coordinator at York Central Hospital and Master of Ceremonies for today's event. Born in Tehran, Iran she left Iran when she was 13, but memories of Norooz, including family gatherings, gift exchanges and traditional rituals are some of the things that she has carried with her since. Jackie now proudly shares her traditions with her family and is excited to have the opportunity to celebrate with her Persian and non Persian colleagues.

"I feel this opportunity has created a special bond amongst the hospital staff," says Samimi. "When we share our cultures with each other, we enable staff to build relationships with each other and our patients, their families and the growing community. When we know a little more about one another, it makes understanding our difference a little easier. This is what makes Canada and specially Richmond Hill so special."

Reza Moridi MPP for Richmond Hill, commented, "As the first Iranian-Canadian elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, it is my honour to extend my warmest greetings as we celebrate the wonderful ancient tradition of Norooz. Norooz is a rich tradition followed by many countries and territories, and marks the first day of spring and the beginning of the Iranian and Afghan calendar. Ontario is so fortunate to be home to so many cultures which celebrate Norooz. And my sincere thanks to York Central Hospital for organizing today's event, and encouraging all members of the community to participate in the celebration of Norooz."

"This annual celebration is eagerly awaited by people of Persian decent around the globe." says **Dr. Larry Grossman, Chief of Staff**. "We are proud to acknowledge and celebrate the cultures of our staff and community and thank the committees for organizing these events for the benefit of all our team members. This is the third year that we have shared in this wonderful celebration with our colleagues."

Sponsored by York Central Hospital staff of Persian descent, this event is one of many held throughout the year to celebrate various cultural traditions and festivities. York Central Hospital reflects the diversity of the community it serves with more than 48 languages spoken by members of our health care team.

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York Central Hospital (www.yorkcentral.on.ca) is a large, full-service community hospital with over 65,000 visits annually to its Emergency Department, serving a population of over 400,000 in Southwest York Region and beyond. Located in one of Canada's fastest growing communities, the hospital is on a Capacity Building Journey that focuses on using the best available practices, the newest technologies and innovative models of service to provide superior patient care.

The hospital has made significant progress on Phase 1 One of its major expansion which is scheduled for completion in late Spring 2009, and has secured funding to proceed with the detailed planning of Phase Two of its redevelopment. Among the many new facilities already open as part of Phase One are: new family birthing centre, new partially opened Emergency Department, new breast health imaging department, new York Regional Chronic Kidney Disease Program space and new 25 bed mental health in-patient unit. In the coming months we will open a new Critical Care Unit as well as new medical imaging department, new classrooms and auditorium as well as new chemotherapy, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault care areas, new fracture, plastics and ophthalmology areas as well as a new in-patient medical/surgical unit in the hospital's new North Wing.