

PRESS RELEASE
March 29, 2002

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Linda McGinity Jackson
502-587-4603
Mary Jennings
502-587-4230
Kathy Keadle
502-852-7504

ABIOCOR RECIPIENT TOM CHRISTERSON, SURGEON ROB DOWLING TO
THROW CEREMONIAL PITCH AT LOUISVILLE SLUGGER FIELD
Cincinnati Reds, Baltimore Orioles Exhibition Game Saturday

LOUISVILLE, Ky. – University of Louisville surgeon Rob Dowling, M.D. and Tom Christerson, the world's second recipient and longest living AbioCor™ Implantable Replacement Heart patient, will join each other at the pitcher's mound to throw out one of the ceremonial balls for an exhibition game between the Cincinnati Reds and the Baltimore Orioles. The game, at 2:05 p.m. Saturday, March 30, will mark the first exhibition game in the history of Louisville Slugger Field and the first major league game to be played in the city since the early 1990s.

Christerson received his artificial heart September 13, 2001, in a landmark surgery at Jewish Hospital performed by University of Louisville surgeons Laman Gray, M.D. and Dr. Dowling. Christerson was released from the hospital March 20, and has been staying at The Inn at Jewish Hospital. The AbioCor Implantable Replacement Heart is manufactured by ABIOMED, of Danvers, Mass.

"Mr. Christerson is using his time at The Inn to adjust to his routine as he prepares to return to his home in Central City," Dr. Gray said. "He's doing very well physically and emotionally, and seems to be making the most of his time away from the hospital."

In addition to physical therapy at Frazier Rehab Institute, Christerson spends his days enjoying time with his family and friends and exploring sites around Louisville. Recent trips have included tours of the Louisville Science Center Museum, The Kentucky Derby Museum and lunches at Mazzoni's Oyster Café.

"I'm having a good time, and everyone at Jewish Hospital has been terrific. But I still can't wait to get home," Christerson said. "I miss Central City."

Christerson will be leaving the game early because of a family event, and will only be available for interviews immediately following the game. He is planning to invite the media to join him at an event next week.

Jewish Hospital is among the top ten cardiac centers in the United States and, along with the University of Louisville, is dedicated to excellence, research and education.

University of Louisville surgeons at Jewish Hospital have performed many heart care “firsts,” including Kentucky’s first heart transplant, the world’s first heart transplant following the use of a Thoratec bi-ventricular assist device, the world’s first endoscopic saphenous vein harvest and the first ventricular remodeling in the region.

####