

# *nicu* Family News

## Things We Couldn't Live Without...

There's no way around it, having a baby in the NICU is hard, incredibly hard. However along the way you may find things that make at least part of your life a little bit easier. We, former NICU parents, put together a list of items that we thought were helpful, some during our babies' hospital stay and some after they came home. We are not suggesting you run out and buy all these things, but wanted to share ideas that saved us time or energy and might do the same for you. Hope you find some of them helpful too.

### Things we couldn't live without at the hospital:

- **Insulated lunch bag/mini cooler** - "Helpful to transport meals for parents and breast milk to hospital."
- **Notebook and pen** - "It may seem 'old school' but it was best way for me to keep track of my endless questions and the answers I got."
- **Family picture of us in isolette** - "It made me feel so much better knowing that even when we weren't there our daughter could see us."
- **Snapfront pajamas for baby** - "Snaps were the best with all the wires and tubes attached to the baby. A must have with a feeding tube."
- **Receiving blankets** - "I initially didn't realize that I could bring my own in, and I liked knowing she had something from home with her."
- **Hand free pumping bra** - "Takes half the time to pump both breasts each time you pump, need we say more?"
- **Nursing tank tops** - "It was so much easier for me to nurse in these than having to carefully lift up a regular shirt."
- **Soothies pads** - "These are great for sore nipples, especially in the beginning, anything that makes nursing easier and more comfortable was good."
- **Medela microwave sterilization bags** - "This was the easiest and quickest way to sterilize pumping equipment."
- **Prepared food section at grocery store** (for example Whole Foods has a good selection) - "There are only so many times you can eat fast food or pizza."
- **Supply of easy snacks** - "Having things like granola bars or trail mix on hand was key for me as I was always hungry when I was nursing."

(continues on page 4)



*The NICU Family News is produced by the Saint Barnabas Medical Center (SBMC) Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) Family Advisory Council (FAC). It is designed to provide you with information we hope you will find useful during and after your family's stay in the NICU.*

## DID YOU KNOW...

... the NICU Family Advisory Council recently helped us create a facebook page - [www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU](http://www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU). Like it on Facebook and see the back of this newsletter to learn more about it.

The SBMC NICU is now on Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU](http://www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU)



94 Old Short Hills Road, Livingston, NJ 07039  
1-888-724-7123 [barnabashealth.org/sbmc](http://barnabashealth.org/sbmc)

**BARNABAS HEALTH**  
Saint Barnabas Medical Center

## Interview with Ginelle Walker Veenhuizen, RNC, BSN, MAS, NICU Patient Care Coordinator (PCC)

Ginelle has been working in the SBMC NICU for 18 years; as a per diem nurse for one year before becoming a PCC.

### Q: What are the main responsibilities of the PCC?

A: The PCC assists the Nurse Manager to make sure that quality nursing care is delivered to all patients and their families, in keeping with the philosophy, policies and procedures of the hospital. The PCC helps with continuing education and with staff performance evaluations, as well as assisting with unit administration, including daily assignments, scheduling, conflict resolution and the day to day running of the unit.

### Q: What made you want to become a nurse?

A: I have always wanted to be a nurse from when I was a little girl. I was always playing dolls and really loved babies and babysitting. I did a rotation in pediatrics/nursery in my last semester of my undergraduate nursing program and just loved it. From that time on, I was hooked.

### Q: What do you like about working in the NICU?

A: The things I love most about working in the NICU are all the wonderful doctors, nurses and other staff members I have been so honored to work with. We are also able to care for a sick infant as well as the family. I feel these first days of life for a baby and family are among the most important in their lives. To be able to have a positive impact on this precious, and often difficult, time in their lives is of great importance to me. I feel strongly that the close relationship established between the infant and the parents during this time affects them for many years to come.

### Q: What does Family Centered Care mean to you?

A: Family Centered Care to me, is what working in a NICU is all about. You can't separate the two. These precious first days of life only happen once and go by very quickly. It is a must for these families to develop a warm, nurturing and affectionate bond and if we can help with this process, this relationship will last over time. To me, in my personal and professional philosophy, there is nothing more important than family.

### Q: Why did you decide to join the NICU Family Advisory Council?

A: I decided to join the NICU Family Advisory Council because I truly wanted to give back. I have attended every Miracle Walk except for one, and was amazed at this incredible group of NICU graduate parents and all they have done for SBMC and our unit. I felt it would be an honor to be part of this hard working, wonderful group and through working with them, ensure the best possible care and outcomes for our patients.

### Q: Have you seen any important changes in the NICU over your years here?

A: I have seen many changes in our NICU over the years but the most beneficial is the advanced respiratory equipment we have been so lucky to use. I feel



Ginelle Walker Veenhuizen, RNC, BSN, MAS, NICU Patient Care Coordinator

these advances have helped in more positive outcomes for our patients. To work in a unit with such a low level of Retinopathy of Prematurity and Chronic Lung Disease is something I am very proud of. Also, involving our families more and making our visitation more open has helped parents and families to spend more time with their baby.

### Q: What advice would you give NICU parents?

A: The most important advice I could give our NICU families is that this is their baby and be as involved and present in their newborns life and care as they can be. Ask questions of the staff and educate yourself in what is going on with the baby on a daily basis. Also, as a mother who breast fed both of my children, I would encourage them to pump and breastfeed because of the many benefits it provides now and in the future health of their baby.

## Mario's NICU Story

Our son, Mario, was born at 24 weeks and 4 days on February 15, 2012. We still remember the feelings of fear and helplessness as the doctors told us they couldn't postpone the delivery any longer and Mario would be arriving over 3 months early. Those feelings only got worse when they told us how different our first moments as parents would be from what we had imagined. We braced ourselves for our baby boy to enter the world incredibly small, pale, listless, and unable to cry.

Mario was born tiny, but stronger than expected, waving his arms and letting out the softest cries that were the best sounds we had ever heard. As he was rushed to the NICU, our faith still a bit shaken, our hopes were high that he would grow into a healthy baby.

The first days were so overwhelming. We found ourselves in very unfamiliar territory. We didn't know how to be parents to a baby we couldn't yet hold or feed, and whose care we were entirely unequipped to handle. We quickly realized, however, that Mario was in the best hands possible. The doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, pharmacists, and social workers that make up the NICU team were there for everything we needed. During the first few weeks, they took as much care of us as they did of our son, and we appreciate it to this day.

After 4 months in the NICU, during which Mario overcame an intra-ventricular brain hemorrhage, chronic lung disease, a case of sepsis, a hernia surgery, retinopathy, and daily struggles with apnea and



*Mario in the NICU doing Kangaroo Care and Happy Little Mario now.*

bradycardia, we brought home a healthy, growing little boy with all the potential of any child his age. Throughout our stay in the NICU, people would tell us all the time that Saint Barnabas Medical Center was the best place for him. At times, that thought was the only thing that gave us comfort. Although we still face some hurdles (a PDA that has not yet resolved and some feeding issues that have slowed his growth a bit), we know that everything we face today is something we can handle. Our son is strong, energetic, and happy. Looking back, there is no doubt that this is due to the care he received in the NICU at Saint Barnabas Medical Center. We will be forever grateful for that care.

- Lisa H.

## Save-The-Date

13th Annual Miracle Walk  
To Benefit the SBMC NICU

**SATURDAY,  
September 28, 2013**

Verona Park, Verona, NJ



To learn more or register:  
**MIRACLEWALK.COM ■ 973-322-4259**

Find MIRACLE WALK on FACEBOOK  
**FACEBOOK.COM/MIRACLEWALK**

## Important Phone Numbers:

NICU  
973-322-5300

NICU Step-down (3100)  
973-322-5310

NICU Nurse Manager  
973-322-8938

NICU Social Workers  
973-322-5503 or 8408

NICU Case Managers  
973-322-2045  
973-322-2678

Birth Certificate Office  
973-322-5327

Lactation Consultants  
973-322-5684

NICU High Risk Infant  
Follow-Up Program  
973-322-2631

## Want to Help the Family Advisory Council?

The FAC is made up of graduate parents dedicated to helping new NICU parents. We meet monthly to discuss ways to do this. We're always looking for recent graduate parents to share their experiences and ideas to make our NICU the best it can be. We welcome your ideas and participation. Contacts:

Eileen Steffen  
NICU Quality & Research  
Coordinator  
esteffen@barnabashealth.org  
973-322-5453

Hayley Hirschmann  
FAC Coordinator  
hhirschmann@barnabashealth.org  
973-322-5453

## New NICU Facebook Page [www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU](http://www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU)

In recent months, with the help of the hospital, the NICU Family Advisory Council has created a Facebook page aimed at parents here in our NICU and beyond.



The Facebook page was developed in response to our NICU graduates who have said it would be helpful to have a place to share information and ask questions of other NICU families upon leaving the NICU as well as during the first months and years at home. So far, the page has numerous personal stories and information and tips that might be helpful. If you have something to share or just want to check it out, please go to [www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU](http://www.facebook.com/SBMCNICU) and like it today!

## Things We Couldn't Live Without (Continued from page 1)

### Things we couldn't live without at home:

- **Hand Sanitizer** - "We kept this EVERYWHERE. "While traveling back and forth from home to the NICU to see our girls, the hand sanitizer was in our cars, our purses, everywhere. Once we got home, we had bottles of it all over the house for us to use and for our guests and older kids to use too."
- **"My Breast Friend Pillow"** - "Was recommended by the lactation consultant to help with positioning during breastfeeding"
- **Boppy pillows** - "When the twins were big enough we propped them up in them and gave them bottles at the same time."
- **Newborn lounger** - "It's a circular pillow that we found at Babies R Us and was the best money we spent!"
- **Fisher Price Newborn Rock 'n' Play Sleeper** - "This is an alternative to bassinets, I can't say enough positive things about these things...portable, comfortable, secure, inclined for reflux issues, etc, etc. The boys slept in them until we moved them to their cribs."
- **Arm's reach co-sleeper** - "Was so helpful for my family, especially for those middle of the night feedings."
- **Wedge for crib** - "Very helpful to keep babies with reflux raised up a bit"
- **Ultra sonic mist humidifier** - "For the little ones whose respiratory system is affected; when they have a cold it's a huge help!"
- **Sound machine or soother** - "Creates 'white noise' to help baby sleep."
- **Dr. Brown's formula mixer pitcher** - "A great product for getting powder formula completely dissolved in no time"
- **Other staple at home items:** video monitor, bouncer, swing, activity gym, front carrier, Aden + Anais muslin swaddles and sleep sacks, Halo sleep sacks, Happy baby wrap