

Family Advisory Council

NICU Family News



The NICU Family News is produced by the Shyan Sun, M.D. Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Family Advisory Council. It is designed to provide you with information we hope you will find useful during and after your family's NICU stay.

Did You Know...

...that whether your baby has been in the NICU for a short or long stay, a professional hospital based photographer can come to their NICU room to take photos of them, you, or you and your baby/babies just before discharge? See the Bella Baby information cards in the NICU Family Lounge for details or text Bella Baby at 862-420-0845 to schedule your photo session or ask questions. There is no cost for the session, just for the photos if you choose to buy them.



The 25th Annual Miracle Walk

On Sunday, October 5, 2025, Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center (CBMC) will host the 25th Annual Miracle Walk fundraiser and celebration to support the Shyan Sun, M.D. Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at CBMC. The event began 25 years ago with the love and appreciation of a few NICU parents who had enormous gratitude for the incredible care the NICU staff took of their premature babies.

Every year, additional grateful families and staff have joined in celebrating at the Miracle Walk in Verona Park. The funds raised have directly benefitted the CBMC NICU by helping fund state-of-the-art medical equipment and various needs in the new NICU since opening eight years ago.

The day is historically filled with smiles, a DJ, face painters, balloon artists, breakfast snacks and coffee and a healthy walk around the lake. This year, the walk will also boast an "afterwalk" 25th Celebration with carnival games, and pizza and shave-ice trucks for families and walkers to enjoy. Come out and enjoy with your friends and loved ones after [registering at miraclego.com](https://www.miraclego.com).

Let's Get to Know: Desire Alcantara, RN, NICU Recent Daisy Honoree for Excellent Nursing

How long have you been working at CBMC in the NICU and where else have you worked?

I've been a nurse for 5 years. I started working in the operating room at a family planning facility and went to cardiovascular/surgical intensive care. I then did one travel assignment in mobile intensive care and finally ended here at CBMC, have been working here in the NICU for almost 3 years now.

Where did you do your nursing education and training?

I got my ASN at Passaic County Community College and obtained my BSN from Western Governors University.

Please describe what your role/responsibilities are in the NICU?

I am currently a bedside nurse. I provide specialized care for premature and critically ill newborns. There are many things to do for the NICU babies each shift including monitoring vital signs, managing medications, feedings, supporting families, and working closely with the NICU team on all fronts.

How did you know you wanted to be a nurse?

I was always interested in medicine and how the human body worked. Initially I wanted to be an OB/GYN but, as I got older, I realized I appreciated the relationship nurses created with their patients and felt that was more my goal.

What do you like the most about working in the NICU?

What I like most about working in the NICU is being able to have a hand in taking care of literal miracles. These tiny babies are the most precious humans. It amazes me how we have advanced so much and are able to save the tiniest most precious lives.

What does family centered care mean to you?

Family centered care to me is being able to support complete strangers during one of the most exciting yet difficult times in their lives. I love being able to teach new parents the basics of taking care of their little ones. My most favorite part is being part of a beautiful and fruitful journey, whether it's teaching first time parents or helping seasoned parents adjust to the changes within their families.



What is the Daisy Award and how did it feel to receive it back in May?

The Daisy Award honors nurses for extraordinary compassion and care. Receiving it felt incredibly humbling and rewarding—it reminded me why I love what I do. (A co-worker who nominated Desire for this award said, "She does not just care for our babies clinically; she cares for them with a kind of tenderness and intentionality that brings comfort to both the infant and the parent.")

Do you have any suggestions or advice for NICU families?

Yes—don't be afraid to ask questions and be hands-on. Your presence, voice, and touch mean more to your baby than you know. You're an important part of their care team!

Anything else you would like to say about your job or the NICU?

It's a privilege to care for these tiny fighters. The NICU is full of hope, strength, and love—and I'm grateful to be part of each family's journey.

OUR MIRACLES



AMELIA

Born at 24 weeks
126 days in the NICU
Now 5 years old
Loves nature walks, arts & crafts and baking



JAZ

Born at 26 weeks, 6 days
69 days in the NICU
Now 15 years old
Loves dance, drawing and cooking



BELLA

Born at 26 weeks
90 days in the NICU
Now 11 years old
Loves math, ladybugs, dance and pasta



MACKENZIE

Born at 26 weeks, 6 days
84 days in the NICU
Now 9 years old
Loves reading, drawing comics and vacations



BROOKLYN, BRYCE & BRIELLE

Born at 24 weeks, 3 days
134 days, 152 days and 141 days in the NICU
Now 13 years old
Loves playing lacrosse, basketball, volleyball and football



SERAYAH

Born at 25 weeks
97 days in the NICU
Now 6 years old
Loves life and all things fun!

25th Annual Miracle Walk
Sunday, October 5, 2025 | Verona Park

Learn more and register your family or a whole team now:
miraclewalk.com or facebook.com/miraclewalk



Important Phone Numbers

NICU: 973-322-5300

NICU Clinical Director:

973-322-8938

NICU Social Worker: 973-322-5503

NICU Case Managers:

973-322-5909/973-322-2678

Birth Certificate Office:

973-322-5327

Lactation Consultants:

973-322-9088

NICU High Risk Infant Follow-Up

Program: 973-322-2631

Spiritual Care Department:

973-322-5015

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.

Contact: Hayley Hirschmann

FAC Coordinator

Hayley.Hirschmann@rwjbh.org

973-322-9486

Keeping Baby Healthy at Home

With any newborn at home, you want to try to avoid having common colds in your home. But from about October to April, you also want to avoid Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), an easily spread cold virus that attacks the respiratory tract. This can be especially serious for preemies because of their immature lungs.

Currently all newborn infants are recommended to get an RSV antibody immunization during this time frame, unless Mom already received a RSV vaccine during pregnancy. You can ask your babies neonatologist about this if you have any questions.

Other things you can do to help keep baby well include:

- Washing hands often and using antibacterial gel
- Keeping your baby away from crowds for several months
- Not allowing your baby to put other children's toys near their mouth
- Asking visitors (and strangers) not to touch your baby's hands or mouth to help prevent the spread of germs
- Washing baby's bedding and items she mouths often
- NOT smoking around your baby

Our tips for keeping your NICU baby healthy around school-age siblings:

- Have siblings wash hands when they first come home from school
- Have them take off their shoes in the house
- Maybe even change clothes from school outfit to play outfit
- If they are sick, try to have them stay at least six feet away from the baby and cover their mouth/nose when coughing/sneezing
- Encourage the use of antibacterial gel and keep it in several easy-to-reach places the child can get to
- Let the school know you have a preemie at home and ask them to alert you to any illnesses that may be floating around the school
- For younger school kids, maybe a show and tell about his/her siblings (either with pictures) and tell the class the importance of hand washing and hygiene
- Set up more play dates outside the home than in the home (and wash those hands!)