

# nicu

## Family News




Laura Lomonte and her 7-year-old NICU graduates, twins Nick and Will, are pictured at the opening of SBMC's Human Milk Depot in August. Laura's sons received banked milk while in the SBMC NICU.

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...

...Did you know...you can plan something special for your NICU baby's "graduation day." Other NICU parents who felt the day their baby was going home from the hospital was a day to celebrate have had a personalized outfit made for them or brought a baby cap and gown to take photos in with the family. Do what feels right for you and feel free to be creative. It's your going-home-with-baby-day!

**Saint Barnabas Medical Center** | **RWJBarnabas HEALTH**

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 [rwjbh.org/sbmc](http://rwjbh.org/sbmc)

### Breastmilk Still Best

We have known for years that breastmilk provides wonderful benefits for babies, especially babies born prematurely. For premature babies, breastmilk has been said to serve almost like medicine and has been shown to help provide antibodies that help stimulate the baby's response to infection and can help the baby grow. Because of this, for the last 10 years, the NICU at Saint Barnabas Medical Center (SBMC) has used only breastmilk, from mom and donor milk, with babies born at less than 33 weeks gestational age.

In a recent interview, Kamtorn Vangvanichyakorn, MD, Director of Neonatology, SBMC, shared that the results of doing this have included a dramatic reduction in the incidence of a devastating digestive problem that occurred in nearly 10% of such fragile pre-term babies. The disease, called Necrotizing Enterocolitis, has a mortality rate as high as 50% and can cause lifelong complications. Through the use of human breastmilk the rate of this disease has been lowered to less than 2% in this population of preterm babies in our NICU.

SBMC recently launched a program to also help moms of full-term babies who want their babies to have only breastmilk, but whose milk has not yet come in fully enough to meet the needs of their babies. SBMC will now be able to provide banked milk as a "bridge" to make it possible for them to feed their babies only breastmilk until their supply alone can meet those babies' needs.

In August, SBMC, in collaboration with Mother's Milk Bank Northeast, opened a **Human Milk Depot** at the hospital - this is the first in NJ for this organization. Carefully screened donors are now able to conveniently drop their milk off at Saint Barnabas Medical Center. There is a screening process which involves several steps, but is free for those wishing to donate.

Sometimes NICU moms even have milk they want to donate after they are discharged from the hospital. In fact, at the Grand Opening of the Milk Depot, it was indeed a mom of a short-stay NICU baby that made the first breastmilk donation. Two other former NICU moms were also on-hand that day to speak to the benefits they felt their babies received from getting donated human milk while they were at SBMC's NICU.

>> continues on page 4

# Interview With Our Baby-Hat-Making NICU Nurses

**Kimberly Brennan, BSN, RNC-NIC, and Moira Griesbach, BSN, RN**



Kimberly Brennan,  
BSN, RNC-NIC



Moira Griesbach, BSN, RN

**Q: How long have you been a nurse?  
How long in the NICU here at  
SBMC?**

A: (Kim) I have been a nurse for 10 years and at Saint Barnabas NICU for a little over eight years.

A: (Moira) I have been a nurse about seven years. I've worked adult medicine and high-risk antepartum before joining the NICU team one and a half years ago.

**Q: How did you know you wanted to  
be a nurse?**

A: (Kim) My mom has been an OB nurse and lactation consultant for my whole life so I have known this is what I wanted to do since about my sophomore year in high school.

A: (Moira) I have always thought I would work in medicine since I was little and since nurses do the most direct care and spend the most time with the patients I knew it would be a perfect fit for me.

**Q: What have you liked the most  
about working in the SBMC NICU?**

A: (Kim) The babies! I love watching them grow and eventually go home. I also love how involved the families stay after they do go home. It's great to see everyone at the Miracle Walk every October. My co-workers also make this the greatest place to work. We wouldn't have the success we with these kids without the teamwork we share.

A: (Moira) Getting to see these amazing babies grow and improve every day is absolutely the best part of working in the NICU. Celebrating all the little victories with the baby's family (and all the other SBMC NICU staff) is so rewarding.

>> continues on page 4

## 19th Annual Miracle Walk To Benefit the SBMC NICU

**Sunday, October 13, 2019**

**9:00 am at Verona Park**

**LEARN MORE AND REGISTER:**

**MIRACLEWALK.COM ■ 973-322-4259**

**FACEBOOK.COM/MIRACLEWALK**



## The Story of Jade

I was 39 years old and did not think I could get pregnant but in May of 2017 I found out that I was pregnant. Due to my age and the high blood pressure I was having, I was referred to the high-risk maternity practice at Saint Barnabas Medical Center who put me on blood pressure medication and recommended I go on light duty at work.

All chromosomal tests and ultrasounds were going well and I found out I was having a girl. I was thrilled things were going well and she was growing. I remember how exciting it was when they showed me all her limbs and organs on the ultrasound. Then, on September 5, during a routine appointment they realized I was ½ cm dilated so they rushed to do an emergency cerclage to help keep my baby inside me longer. It was chaos and I was here all alone because I thought it was just going to be a routine appointment. The cerclage was successful and I was discharged to go home the next day but stayed out of work the rest of that week. Then I went back to work on light duty hoping to get to 25 weeks gestation and then beyond that, week by week.

The week after I went back to work, the baby kicked for the first time and it scared me so I went to the Emergency Room. They kept me overnight to monitor my high blood pressure. The first week in October I went back for a checkup and they told me my baby had stopped growing and was leaking amniotic fluid. The OB said her heart beat was strong though! At my high-risk OB appointment on October 17, at 27 weeks gestation, they surprised me and said I would need to stay in the hospital the rest of my pregnancy. That Saturday morning I had some pain and the doctors that examined me said she was going to have to be born that day by emergency C-Section.

Beautiful, strong Jade was born later that day at 27 weeks and 6 days, weighing 11lb. 8 oz., with her clenched fist raised in the air - as if to say "I am here!" They brought her over for me to see her close up and I immediately nick-named her "Snicker-doodle."

She was an amazing tiny thing right from the start. When they wheeled me to see her in the NICU she was breathing on her own with no machines helping her. Amazing! She looked peaceful under the blue glow of the bilirubin lights and I was overwhelmed with the joyful thought of being a mother. Two months and one week later, just after Christmas, Jade came home from the NICU.

During the time Jade was in the NICU, the staff took wonderful care of her and explained everything to me in detail. I felt like the staff were looking out for me, as well as Jade. They would remind me to make sure to eat, and get enough rest, and take care of myself so I could take the best care of Jade. The POD Jade was in became like a second home for me and I found the space very comfortable and private and loved spending time with her - holding her and reading to her. It was actually hard to say goodbye to the staff when it was time to go home.

Jade is now an adorable almost-two-year old who loves to play with everything. She smiles often. She loves to sing and dance. She sings her ABC's and can count her numbers up to 10. I would like to say thank you so much to all the wonderful NICU staff who took care of us because I don't think she would have survived if it weren't for all of you.

Thank you so much,  
Fenese C.



Jade in the NICU



Jade On Her First Night Home



Jade Now With Her Mom

## Important Phone Numbers:

- NICU  
973-322-5300
- NICU Nurse Manager  
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

## 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:

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NICU Quality & Research  
Coordinator  
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973-322-9485

Hayley Hirschmann  
FAC Coordinator  
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## Breastmilk Still Best (continued from page 1)

If you or any one you know are interested in donating breastmilk additional details can be found on the Mother's Milk Bank Northeast website at [milkbankne.org/donate](http://milkbankne.org/donate). Mother's Milk Bank Northeast manages the screening process and picks up all milk donated at SBMC so it can be pasteurized before it is distributed. There is no such milk bank yet in NJ. Also keep in mind they accept previously frozen milk, up to 6 to 7 months after the pump date.

## Interview (continued from page 2)

**Q: How did you get involved knitting special hats for the NICU babies for special occasions? What holidays/occasions have you done it for? Do you enlist help from anyone?**

A: (Kim) Well, I've always enjoyed doing crafty type things and learned how to crochet as a kid but never really practiced it. Once I started working here I decided to re-teach myself so I could make hats for the babies. A couple of years ago one of my co-workers organized pictures with Santa for the babies and that's really where the holiday pictures started. So far we've done pumpkins and costumes for Halloween, turkeys for Thanksgiving, Santa and ornament hats for Christmas, hats with hearts for Valentine's Day and owls for Mother's Day. Also, our NICU nurse manager and clinical coordinator put together cute outfits for Father's Day too. The NICU families love it and the babies look so cute!

A: (Moir) I got involved with the hat making for Thanksgiving 2018. Kim Brennan had heard that I had made crochet projects for my previous unit and asked me to help her make turkey hats. I have made hats for almost every holiday since! I've made hats for Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day/Heart Health month, Mother's Day, and 4th of July. I'm sure we'll do the same holidays again, I would love to make some pumpkin hats and I already have some yarn for Christmas! I have tons of help from my amazing family! My mother, sister, and sister-in-law have all helped with making hats for our sweet babies.

**Q: What suggestions or advice do you have for NICU families?**

A: (Moir) I think the best advice I could give would be to try to take every day one day at a time. The NICU journey can sometimes be a long road so try to celebrate all the tiny victories along the way. Also, send the SBMC NICU staff updates and pictures after you graduate because we love them so much.

A special thank you also to NICU nurse Katie Rodriques for convincing her own mom to help crochet hats for our babies and to NICU nurse Janet Camasta for helping our families and babies try to celebrate milestone days and holidays in our NICU for years!