

nicu Family News



TEN YEARS OF CHANGE

The Miracle Walk, a fundraiser which raises money for new equipment for the SBMC NICU, turns 10 years old this year. We thought this made it the perfect time to take a look back at the past 10 years to see the many ways the NICU has changed to better meet the many needs of its babies and families. To follow are many of the changes by year:

2001:

- First Annual Miracle Walk held; raised \$104,000.

2002:

- First specialized Giraffe® OmniBed® isolettes purchased with Miracle Walk funds.
- Kangaroo Care began to be practiced in the NICU.



2003:

- Oxygen blenders became available in Delivery Room. Air/oxygen blenders help give each baby the exact amount of oxygen needed from the first minutes of life. This helps avoid other complications of receiving too much oxygen especially for very premature babies.

2004:

- Agreed to participate in the two-year Vermont Oxford Network's "Your Ideal NICU" project.
- Opened an additional room within the NICU to increase number of beds from 48 to 56.

2005:

- Two lactation consultants hired to support NICU moms' breastfeeding needs.
- Moms can now breastfeed in the NICU without needing doctor's orders.
- Family Advisory Council (FAC) formed and Graduate NICU parent hired part-time as coordinator.
- First monthly FAC meeting held.
- Parent survey developed; began to ask NICU families about their NICU experience.
- FAC developed idea and proposal for a NICU Family Resource Center with a library and lounge; presented to hospital administration in July.

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...

...Your baby could be ready to go home any time after reaching 34 weeks gestation (6 weeks before your original due date). To go home, your baby must also be able to maintain their temperature in an open crib, take all their feedings by mouth in a timely manner while continuing to gain weight, and pass the car seat challenge.

94 Old Short Hills Road
Livingston, NJ 07039
1-888-SBHS-123
saintbarnabas.com



SAINT BARNABAS
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
Saint Barnabas Medical Center



Interview With NICU Staff Nurses

In recognition of the 10th Anniversary Miracle Walk, we asked the NICU staff nurses, **“What changes have you seen in Family Centered Care efforts in the unit over the last 10 years and what do they seem to mean to the families?”** To follow are their responses.



“Now I see the fathers more involved and I recently had a father do Kangaroo Care with his baby in the NICU and he loved it. He really seemed to be bonding with the baby and I see more dads trying to develop a relationship with the babies early on.” **(NICU nurse 30 years)**

“I have really seen parents encouraged to be involved and ask questions. They are encouraged to be in the unit when the doctors make rounds. It didn't use to be like that. The parents seem more and more involved to me all the time. It seems to give them a comfort level they need.” **(NICU nurse of 29 years)**

“When the sibling visitation started it was hard for staff. I think it still is, but it is really good for the kids. They get to see their little brother or sister and it seems to mean a lot to them and the whole family.” **(NICU nurse of 30 years)**

“I remember 10 years ago we used to chase the parents out of the unit when the doctors came in to talk to the nurses. Now we encourage them to stay and participate and fully understand and be a part of their baby's care and the related decisions.” **(NICU nurse 14 years)**

“I think the lactation consultants helping the parents has been a big change. I think the moms are bonding earlier because of it and many more moms get the baby to breast in the NICU now because the lactation consultants are right at their side helping and encouraging them every step of the way.” **(NICU nurse 33 years)**

“Wow, there have been so many. The sibling visitation, the parents having open (24/7) access to the unit, becoming more open to breastfeeding, the kangaroo care... The kangaroo care seems very helpful for families emotionally - it seems to make them feel better. It really helps with the milk production and bonding with the baby too. We have lots of dads now who want to do and it definitely seems to help them bond.”

(NICU nurse 16 years)





A 10-Year Friendship...

It has been said that as you get older the friends you make are your children's friends' parents. We never thought it would

happen the first year of our sons' lives. Our story is about three families who would have never met if it wasn't for our children's premature births and the SBMC NICU.

One October morning in 2000, a man with a friendly face noticed we were new parents to the NICU and out of sorts. He extended his hand and said "Hi, I am Jonathan Hirschmann; let me show you what you need to do." On that day, Jonathan became the first unofficial NICU Buddy. Jonathan introduced us to his wife, Hayley, and their baby, Lauren. Our son Jarrod's isolette was next to Lauren's and it is here where the friendship began. Our other son Harrison's isolette was a few rows away.

During our NICU stay, we supported each other through the highs and the lows. We applauded as our children gained each pound. We shared hugs and tears when we received news that we did not want to hear. We were each other's "rock". We made the NICU stay a little bit better for each other and knew we were not alone. We were in it together.

After about four weeks, we began preparing for our boys to go home. The Hirschmann's presented us with the most loving gift. They gave us two Minnesota Twins outfits that were meant for their daughter, Lauren, and their son, Matthew, who had

sadly passed away a few hours after he was born. We were deeply moved by this offering of a precious gift from a family we just met. On both days that our sons were discharged, again it was the Hirschmann's who walked us out and wished us well.

Over the next few months, we followed Lauren's progress and cheered when she was discharged. After Lauren was home the Hirschmann's approached us with their idea of the Miracle Walk. Following their leadership, we eagerly worked with them on the Miracle Walk committee.

Appropriately, it was another October morning, when the Scalora's walked into our lives. We met for the first time at the very first Miracle Walk. The Scalora's story was similar to both of ours. Their son Lucas was in the NICU, for extreme prematurity, the April before us. Lucas's nickname is Lucky. Just call my family "lucky" to have met these two wonderful families.

Over the 10 years, our friendship has grown beyond Miracle Walk and FAC meetings. We all enjoy each other's company and have shared many great moments together. We have had play dates and Mom/Couples Night Out. We have celebrated births, birthdays, job changes, job promotions, new homes and most importantly our children's academic, sports and life accomplishments. We have moved from introductions as our "NICU Friends" to simply our friends. I believe things happen for a reason. Since leaving the NICU, I have learned why. My family has made great friends in the Hirschmann's and the Scalora's. I look forward to the next 10 years and sharing more memorable times with them. -K.L.K



**10th Annual Miracle Walk
to Benefit the SBMC NICU
Sunday, 10/10/10
Verona Park, Verona, NJ**

**Complimentary carnival to follow walk
in celebration of 10 years of fundraising!**

REGISTER NOW:

**Visit www.miraclegwalk.com ■ Email miraclegwalk@sbhcs.com ■ Call 973-322-4259
You can also find MIRACLE WALK on Facebook!**

Important Phone Numbers:

NICU

973-322-5300

NICU Step-down (3100)

973-322-5310

NICU Nurse Manager

973-322-5345

NICU Social Workers

973-322-5503 or 8408

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@sbhcs.com

973-322-5453

Hayley Hirschmann

FAC Coordinator

hhirschmann@sbhcs.com

973-322-5453

TEN YEARS OF CHANGE *continued*

2006:

- Educational handouts on common NICU topics developed for parents.
- Discharge Preparation Class began for families of infants born weighing less than 1500 grams or 3.3 pounds.



2007:

- Sibling visitation began for immunized children 5 years of age and older.
- First NICU Parent Buddy Training Class held.
- First NICU Parent Buddies assigned to NICU families.

2008:

- NICU nurses attended a six-part educational series, "Partnering with Parents."
- New breast pumping area with three pumping stations opened on 3100/stepdown unit.
- NICU Family Lounge and Library opened.
- Premier issue of *NICU Family News* written by graduate NICU parents.
- Completed *NICU Parent Handbook*; began giving it out to NICU families for information and support.
- CribNotes™ electronic charting including automated daily e-mail update for families began.
- TINA Transcutaneous Carbon Dioxide Monitors became available.



2009:



- Banked Human Donor Milk program started for NICU moms and babies who need it.
- First NICU Family Pizza Night; held monthly since.
- First Neurally Adjusted Ventilatory Assist (NAVA), pictured, was purchased with Miracle Walk money. This advanced technology allows the baby to control and adjust his/her need for ventilation reducing the risk of over or under ventilating a baby. This is also felt to be more comfortable for the baby.

2010:

- NICU opened to parents during nursing shift changes; made NICU accessible 24/7.
- NICU Sibling Guide and Sibling Activity Book completed.
- NICU Sibling Group sessions began.
- Nasal NAVA use began.

