



THE WALL OF HOPE AT THE 2015 MARCH OF DIMES NICU REUNION

# March of Dimes NICU Family Support Committee Newsletter

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## March of Dimes 2015 NICU Reunion a HUGE success!

This year, for the March of Dimes NICU Family Reunion, we had over 500 attendants! This was our largest reunion yet!

Activities throughout the day included an animated story time, crafts, dancing and singing. Bella Baby Photography graciously provided family photos to each of the reunion families. Pizzas were provided by Home Run Inn.

Over 45 families went home with prizes from the day's free sweepstakes, which was organized by NICU Nurse and Reunion Sweepstakes Chair, Andrea Caruso.

Angela LoGalbo, a Prentice NICU graduate mom and the Reunion Decorations Chair said, "When my son left the NICU, I was overjoyed but also so nervous for what the future held. A year and a half later, we were invited to our first NICU reunion at Prentice. It was a wonderful day for my family as we were able to celebrate his accomplishments and perseverance. I decided to volunteer for this year's reunion because our first

reunion was such a meaningful event for us. I wanted to help other families recognize how far their children have come since leaving the NICU. The theme for this year's reunion was "Oh, The Place You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss, which was so fitting. The 2015 reunion was a great success! There were so many kids enjoying all of the family-friendly activities.

One of my main roles was to coordinate the Wall of Hope, which shared stories and pictures of the babies attending the reunion. These stories eventually go on to the hang on the walls in the NICU. We had over 100 stories on the wall and they all offered powerful stories of hope for the tiniest patients at Prentice."

The Reunion Planning Committee and our NICU Family Support Specialist, Jessica Bowen, did a wonderful job pulling off this event! Thank you to everyone that volunteered to make this event so successful!

More pictures of the 2015 NICU Reunion can be found at [nicu.nm.org](http://nicu.nm.org).



### NICU Dads' Networking Night

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, the NICU Family Support Committee hosted its first NICU Dads' Networking Night

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### NICU Nurse Dawn Johnson Makes Keepsake Blankets for Families



NICU families decorated fabric squares on April 12<sup>th</sup> to make keepsake baby blankets

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## First Ever Dads' Networking Night Brings NICU Fathers Together

The March of Dimes NICU Family Support Committee hosted its first ever NICU Dads' Networking Night on March 13<sup>th</sup>. The goal was to foster NICU dads supporting one another during the difficult time that a NICU stay can be. Over the course of the evening, we had a dozen dads stop by and enjoy pizza, wings and March Madness hype. Many of our male staff members also came by to show their support.

There were March Madness Brackets available for each of the dads to fill out, as well. The Brackets acted as way for the participating dads to communicate outside of the NICU and socialize.

"I had a great time talking to each of the dads. I hope we have events like that more often," NICU Respiratory Therapist Larry Zawilenski said.



Photo source: Kaitlin Horan

## Calendar



## Upcoming Events

- **March for Babies**, Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup>
- **Mother's Day Brunch**, Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup>
- **Illinois Lobby Day**, Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup>
- **International Kangaroo Awareness Day**, Friday May 15<sup>th</sup>
- **Professional Development Day** (Sponsored by the March of Dimes NICU Family Support Program), Tuesday May 19<sup>th</sup>
- **Father's Day BBQ in the NICU**, Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup>
- **Lagunitas Brewery Fundraiser supporting Parking for Premies**, Tuesday June 30<sup>th</sup>

## NICU Families Make Keepsake Baby Blankets with Help of Nurse Dawn Johnson

On Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, the March of Dimes NICU Family Support Program hosted an event in which NICU families decorated muslin fabric squares to make a keepsake baby blanket. We had over 30 people attend, which was the largest group for this event to date! NICU Nurse Dawn Johnson, who quilts in her free time, took the muslin squares and will quilt a keepsake blanket for each of the participant families.

She says, "I started the Keepsake Blanket project as a way for the whole family to come together and create a keepsake of the infant's birth and milestones. I thought the families could use them to personalize the infant's bed space by using it as an isolette cover or hanging it up on wall. I encourage them to decorate the 7x7 muslin squares through use of fabric pens, markers, stickers and ribbons to celebrate their welcome into this world. Families put words of encouragement and prayers for their newest family member. I think the families enjoy this activity because it's a little fun and positive family time in a stressful experience."



Photo source: Jessica Bowen



## Close to Me Core Curriculum Heightens Skin-to-Skin Awareness

The March of Dimes NICU Family Support Program unveiled its newest core curriculum on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The *Close to Me* parent class focuses on the benefits of providing skin-to-skin care to babies in the NICU. Six NICU parents attended the first class, and exemplary feedback was received!

*Close to Me* Instructor and NICU Nurse, Kim

Ladd said, "I am excited to be teaching the *Close to Me* class for our parents monthly. It's a great opportunity for parents to learn the benefits of skin-to-skin while chatting with other parents at the same time. It's also a time for parents to ask all kinds of questions about caring for their baby."

The class will now be held monthly, with the next class being on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 pm.

Families that attend the class will receive a free March of Dimes plush kangaroo.



Photo source: Kim Ladd

## March for Babies: Along the Lakefront on April 26<sup>th</sup>

Please join us for the March for Babies walk on Sunday, April 26<sup>th</sup>! We currently have about 30 staff members signed up to walk.

"It has been great to be the NICU Team Captain this year for the March for Babies. It is rewarding to encourage my co-workers to walk and raise money for such a great organization. Participating in the walk is a simple and fun way to support the March of Dimes' mission of helping mothers to have full-term and healthy pregnancies," said NICU Nurse Kristina Scholberg.

We currently have \$3,757 raised, which is the most the Northwestern NICU team has ever raised. Congratulations!

If you can't sign up to walk with us, please consider donating to the team. You can do so by visiting [marchforbabies.org](http://marchforbabies.org) and searching for "NICU Families and Staff".

## Santa Visited the NICU: A Recap of Holiday 2014

This past December, the March of Dimes NICU Family Support Program invited Santa and Mrs. Claus to the NICU for the second year in a row.

Taking their roles as Santa and Mrs. Claus were David Babbitt, a Prentice NICU graduate dad of triplets, and Heather Kiernan, former director of Women's Health.



Photo source: Bella Baby

"It was wonderful to see the encouragement Santa brought to all of the parents," Kiernan said. Families enjoyed a dinner donated by Wishbone, as well as holiday music sung by carolers.

"The NICU can be made even more difficult with the arrival of the holidays," Babbitt said, "It was so rewarding to see the smiles on the parents' faces when Santa showed up to take pictures."

## NICU Lifestyle Jackets Still a Hit with Staff

Last October, the NICU Family Support Committee launched the sale of co-branded Northwestern Medicine and March of Dimes NICU Family Support jackets. To date, over 175 jackets have been ordered by staff.



Photo source: Kaitlin Horan

A special thanks to Family Support Committee member and Prentice NICU graduate mom, Kenyetta Weaver for her help in designing the footprint logo.

## Professional Development Day: Improving NICU Family Experiences

Next month on Tuesday, May 19<sup>th</sup>, the March of Dimes NICU Family Support Program will be sponsoring a free Professional Development Day for Prentice NICU Staff.

Based on feedback from staff, two family-centered workshop topics were chosen.

- **Overheard: What We Say, What We Mean and What Families Hear**, will be held at Lurie Children's Hospital from 12:00 – 1:00 PM
- **Easing Trauma at the Bedside: Supporting NICU Families in Crisis**, will be from 2:00 – 3:00 PM at Prentice Women's Hospital

Staff are encouraged to attend one or both sessions, and 1.25 contact hours per session will be provided for participation.

To RSVP for the Lurie session, please e-mail Sue Horner at [shorner@luriechildrens.org](mailto:shorner@luriechildrens.org).

To RSVP for the Prentice session, please e-mail Jessica Bowen at [jbowen@marchofdimes.org](mailto:jbowen@marchofdimes.org).

