

# BFREE E-Newsletter

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## THE NEW YORK MILK BANK: PROVIDING INFANTS WITH DONATED BREAST MILK

By: Karina L Chiddo, BS and Anastasia Schepers, MS, RDN, CDN, CLC

The New York Milk Bank (NYMB) opened its doors to their new Valhalla location on May 8, 2019. NYMB, the first milk bank in the state, was created to provide pasteurized donor human milk to infants in need whose mother’s own milk was unavailable or insufficient. In 2017, New York joined five other states to allow Medicaid to cover donor milk. This was a huge win for babies and their families, especially those in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Traditionally, infants are provided with powdered or ready-to-feed formula when their mother’s own milk supply is low or not available. Studies on the effects of formula given to premature infants have been controversial; some suggest negative long-term outcomes such as necrotizing enterocolitis, sepsis, extended time on intravenous nutrition, and possible intolerances or aversions to oral feedings.<sup>1</sup> “Most importantly,” according to Jennifer Giordano, MS, APRN, FNP, IBCLC, “human milk provides hospitalized infants and premature infants with special nutritional and immunological components that are found only in breast milk.” Since premature infants are at an increased risk for fatal infections, the essential nutrients, growth factors, digestive enzymes, hormones, and immunological protection found in breast milk are especially crucial.<sup>2</sup>

While mother’s milk is best, donor milk become the next best option for the health and growth of an infant. The nutrient content of breast milk varies depending on mother’s diet, stage of lactation, and the process of pasteurization. Some nutritional value may be lost during pasteurization, as it requires heating the milk to 145°F for 30 minutes.<sup>3</sup> However, recent studies found pasteurization to have minimal effects on immune-protective properties of donor milk.<sup>2</sup> Another study has shown that donor milk has similar positive effects on the gut microbiome when compared to infants given their mother’s milk.<sup>4</sup>

NYMB currently collects from 26 milk depots, services 32 New York hospitals, and has dispensed over 200,000 fluid ounces of donor milk so far this year. Cohen Children’s Medical Center is one of the hospitals to receive and provide donor milk to their premature infants in need. When babies leave the hospital, donor milk can be prescribed by their healthcare provider to continue feedings at home. Donor milk can also be prescribed through outpatient services, but priority is given to hospitalized infants. Approximately 50,000 ounces of the dispensed donor milk this year was covered by insurance. NYMB can help seek coverage through private insurance and Medicaid.

How does NYMB receive donor milk? Mothers who over-produce breast milk can go through four easy steps to become a donor. First, potential donors undergo a quick screening by phone call to see if they meet basic criteria. Second, mothers submit a written health and lifestyle application along with consent and medical forms. Third, the mother’s provider completes forms for medical clearance. Lastly, the mother completes a free blood test to ensure that she is ready to become a donor. Potential donors are screened for communicable diseases and health concerns such as the use of nicotine products, milk enhancing herbs, and certain medications. Donors can drop the milk off to “milk depots,” which can be found on NYMB’s website. Milk depots are holding areas for donor milk, before it is shipped frozen overnight to NYMB, where it will be processed.

NYMB provides support to mothers and babies who need safely pasteurized and affordable donor milk. For more information about New York Milk Bank, how to donate or receive, you can go to their website [www.nymilkbank.org](http://www.nymilkbank.org) or call 212-956-MILK (6455).



Original artwork by Dondai Dean

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*Left:* Karina L Chiddo, BS is shown at the New York Milk Bank. Karina served as a Dietetic Intern at Cohen Children’s Medical Center.

*Right:* Anastasia Schepers, MS, RDN, CDN, CLC. Anastasia educates youth and parents through Cohen Children’s Medical Center’s Kohl’s Cares obesity prevention grant and counsels patients in the Department of Adolescent Medicine’s Eating Disorder program.



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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear BFREE Coalition Members,

Welcome to our July 2019 BFREE Newsletter! We hope everyone has had an enjoyable start to summer. In this issue of the quarterly newsletter, we focus on the topic of human milk donations and highlight two new multilingual Baby Cafés that our team helped open in Southampton and Brentwood (page 2).

On page 1, we hear from one of our Project Coordinators, Anastasia Schepers, and her Dietetic Intern, Karina Chiddo, about the role of milk banks in New York and the steps a mother can take to donate. We then share the personal experiences of three mothers who donated breast milk, which are featured on page 3. On page 4, we hear from an expert on breastfeeding and nursing, Dr. Hylton-McGuire, about the importance of donated milk for pre-term or ill infants, and how one mom’s advocacy managed to change an entire hospital system.

We are looking forward to collaborating with our coalition partners for National Breastfeeding Month, which is the month of August. You can find a list of celebratory events on page 4.

As always, we are so grateful to the contributors to this edition, to the BFREE Steering Committee members for their ongoing helpful guidance and direction, and to each of you for your engagement and passion in support of breastfeeding. We welcome any feedback and contribution to future newsletters. Please email your ideas to us at [BFREE@northwell.edu](mailto:BFREE@northwell.edu).

Many thanks for your continued support!

Henry (Hank) Bernstein, DO, MHCM, FAAP  
Principal Investigator  
Creating Breastfeeding Friendly Communities

## SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT: TWO NEW MULTILINGUAL BABY CAFÉS OPEN UP IN SUFFOLK COUNTY

**By: Yun Chao Chen, BA, CLC**

The opening of the Southampton Baby Café at the Child Care Center of the Hamptons on April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 marked the beginning of the first multilingual Baby Café in Long Island. The Baby Café offers lactation advice from trained lactation professionals in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. One of the Café’s facilitators, Allyne Bernardes, CLC, hopes that eliminating language barriers will “empower mothers to ask more questions about breastfeeding, share their personal experiences, and create a more tight-knit support network for both current and future members.”

On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019, Pronto of Long Island opened a bilingual (English/Spanish) Baby Café. Maryjean Williams, RN and La Leche League support group leader, shared her excitement about helping to lead the Baby Café: “Growing up, I did not have any friends or family members that breastfed their babies, [but] now, at this Baby Café, I can help a parent who may breastfeed one day or one year longer thanks to my support.”

Congratulations to the multilingual Southampton and Pronto Baby Cafés! The details of all BFREE Baby Cafés are listed below, including locations, hours, and contact information. Please contact [BFREE@northwell.edu](mailto:BFREE@northwell.edu) with any questions.

- **Southside Hospital** in Bay Shore— every Tuesday from 1:30pm-3:30pm. Contact Wendi Andria, RNC, IBCLC, at (631) 894-5284 or [wandria@northwell.edu](mailto:wandria@northwell.edu)
- **Community Nazarene Church** in Wyandanch— select Saturdays, including July 20th and August 3rd, from 11:30am-1:30pm. Contact (631) 920-6844 or [contact@communitynazchurch.org](mailto:contact@communitynazchurch.org)
- **Pronto of Long Island** in Bay Shore— first and third Thursday of every month from 11am-1pm. Contact Vivian at (631) 231-8290 or [vivianhart@prontolongisland.org](mailto:vivianhart@prontolongisland.org)
- **Child Care Center of the Hamptons** in Southampton— every Tuesday from 5:30pm-7pm. Contact (631) 353-3331 or [southamptonbabycafe@gmail.com](mailto:southamptonbabycafe@gmail.com)



*Above:* A Baby Café is a free, drop-in lactation support group run by trained staff.

*Below:* Mothers hold their babies at our Wyandanch Baby Café.



**By: Allison Taub**

Leading up to the birth of my first daughter in February 2015, I went to several great prenatal classes at Childbearing Family Alliance, including one on breastfeeding. I decided to breastfeed after hearing about the numerous benefits to my baby's health and my health, and the money that I would save by breastfeeding. My first ever interaction with a breastfeeding mother was several years earlier. The young and confident mother, named Carrie, responded to her daughter's hunger cues regardless of other peoples' opinions; she made breastfeeding look like a breeze. Then came my turn when Rosalie was born, and it was not an easy start. We worked hard to learn about each other and keep our breastfeeding journey on track. She slept through the night early on, so I often had to wake up to pump for relief. The combination of her "magic baby" lengthy sleep and my return to work at 6 weeks, pumping every three hours in the 11-12 hour period that we were separated, caused a generous oversupply of milk.

However, since this was my first baby, I was so nervous that something would happen to me that I had to have a "stash" of milk. I carefully saved milk and logged it, but soon the freezer was full so I started making "bricks" of milk: gallon ziplock bags of flat, frozen milk storage bags, which I stored at my mom's place. Her freezer also became full, and since my daughter refused the frozen milk, it was accumulating more rapidly than I could store it. I remembered hearing about milk donation from a colleague and looked into the process and options.

Knowing how well my daughter was thriving on breast milk, it was an easy decision to give the milk away to help others. I started out small, choosing to donate only half the stash as I was still petrified of not having enough milk to get my daughter to a year. However, the milk was still flowing and quickly filling the freezer, so I began giving more milk at each donation. I finally felt O.K. keeping only the freshest 150 ounces after each donation, and I continued to donate milk when my second daughter arrived in April 2017.

In total, my girls and I have shared about 18,000 ounces of milk. I feel grateful to have had so many people support me through the difficulties in our breastfeeding journey, so that I was able to both feed my babies and help others to grow, too!



*Allison is a mother of two, a teacher, and wife of John. She loves the outdoors, sports, and crafting.*

**By: Stephanie Stuerzel, RN, CBC**

As a NICU nurse and a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, I have been continuously surrounded by "liquid gold" and all its benefits. I became extremely interested in breast milk and breastfeeding. When I found out that I was pregnant two years ago, I knew that I wanted to breastfeed my son for at least one year. I was pleasantly surprised when I was able to feed him breast milk exclusively for 14 months. I

was even more surprised when I was able to provide 1500 ounces to the NY Milk Bank for infants in need. Through my breastfeeding and pumping journey, I feel closer to all the NICU mothers I care for because I understand their devastation when milk is spilled or when they are unable to keep up with their babies' demand. I also understand their excitement when their babies latch for the first time, or when they are able to produce enough milk to freeze some. Breastfeeding has not only strengthened my bond with my son, but also enhanced my relationship with my patients by giving me the opportunity to donate milk.

*Stephanie Stuerzel completed her Masters of Science degree in Pediatrics Primary Care from Stony Brook University. She also obtained a Bachelor of Science in health science and nursing from Stony Brook. She currently works in the NICU at NYU Winthrop, where she has been since 2015. She became a Certified Breastfeeding Counselor (CBC) earlier this year, with hopes of eventually becoming an IBCLC.*

**By: Brittany Ruczaj**

My breastfeeding journey began with fear and self-doubt. My closest friends and family had either not pursued breastfeeding or had given up after only a few weeks in. As much as I wanted to nurse my daughter I just didn't know if I'd be able to do it.

The first thing I noticed when Faith was born was the need for support; that's when I learned about Baby Cafés. The other mothers in attendance and Wendi Andria, an IBCLC and head facilitator of the Southside Hospital Baby Café, provided the support I needed to succeed at breastfeeding. Any feelings of frustration or depression were replaced with encouragement and the motivation to continue my breastfeeding journey until Faith's first birthday! I was proud of myself and, upon looking back, recognize that I truly enjoyed every second of it.

Towards the end of my journey, I realized I had created a freezer stash of breast milk that I simply didn't need. I had a desire to give back and show gratitude for all the help I had received along the way. I crossed paths with a mother who was a breast cancer survivor and who was unable to nurse her newborn son since she had had a bilateral mastectomy. However, she had been able to exclusively provide her son with breast milk thanks to donations. The fact that she was a breast cancer survivor struck a close personal chord with me, as my mother is one as well. I knew I had to help, not only to repay the support I received on my breastfeeding journey, but also to show my eternal gratitude that I still have my mom here! Donating my breast milk allowed the mother to continue to provide her child with breast milk. Giving back was extremely gratifying.

*Brittany is a mother of one. She loves spending time with her daughter, husband, and dog.*





