



OKLAHOMA MOTHERS' MILK BANK SCREENS 1,000TH DONOR MOM

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Mothers' Milk Bank (OMMB) has screened its 1,000th donor mother.

“We are thrilled to achieve this milestone in our first three years of dispensing safe pasteurized donor milk throughout Oklahoma,” said Becky Mannel, executive director of the milk bank.

Milk donors undergo a strict screening process before their milk is accepted at the milk bank. Donated milk is then pasteurized and lab tested before being distributed to neonatal intensive care units (NICU) around the state.

Oklahoma continues to rank well above the national average for infant mortality.

“Many of those deaths are due to Oklahoma’s high rate of preterm birth and babies born with complications,” Mannel said. “While breastfeeding is strongly recommended for all babies, it is even more critical that our sickest and smallest babies receive human milk feedings. And in many of these cases, the mother herself is sick or had pregnancy complications and may not be able to provide enough of her own milk.”

OMMB was formed to help these babies survive, go home from the hospital in better health and avoid readmission.

Some babies in the community have also received safe donor milk from the milk bank, even after leaving the NICU. When Kathy Motto’s daughter died during the birth of her grandson, Motto turned to OMMB for help as Isaiah was not tolerating any formula after leaving the NICU.

“We are eternally grateful to the milk bank for providing Isaiah with life-sustaining, safe donor milk for the first six months of his life,” Motto said. “They compassionately and generously responded to my request for help, and Isaiah’s health issues improved once he switched back to human milk. He is content, peaceful and growing.”

Currently there is no funding from Medicaid or other insurance providers in Oklahoma for pasteurized donor milk after hospital discharge.

“We try not to turn any baby away. Our goal is to help babies survive and thrive!” said Keri Hale, clinical director of the milk bank.

OMMB has managed to provide \$30,000 worth of safe donor milk in 2016 to babies who have a medical need but hopes to one day meet the full demand from the community.

“We are very proud of the progress we have made in our first three years of operations,” said Mannel, who was recently elected to the board of directors for the Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA). “Much of that is due to the collaboration with and support from the Oklahoma Blood Institute, the Oklahoma State Department of Health and also to the 1,000 mothers who have generously taken time and energy to be screened for milk donation. Oklahomans should be proud that we were the 13th HMBANA accredited milk bank in the United States when we began dispensing pasteurized donor milk in 2013.”

While there are now 22 operating HMBANA milk banks, most states still do not have their own milk bank.

For more information about the Oklahoma Mothers' Milk Bank, visit www.okmilkbank.org, call the milk bank at (405) 297-LOVE or email info@okmilkbank.org.

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