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Nonprofit milk banks collaborate in North Texas to help fragile babies

May 5-6, 2017, Arlington, TX - This weekend, over 120 milk banking executive directors, practitioners, and developing milk banks attended the first annual nonprofit milk banking symposium to discuss how human milk saves the lives of premature babies. The Human Milk Banking Association of North America (HMBANA) promotes equal access for all infants in need to equitably sourced, pasteurized donor human milk, and promotes breastfeeding.

“Our gathering to share best practices, define our goals, and promote the latest human milk research as it applies to milk banking is driven by our mission to meet the growing demand for donor milk,” said HMBANA Board President Naomi Bar-Yam.

Participants came from across the United States and as far as Vancouver to discuss donor milk’s rising use. Some key points highlighted during the symposium were:

- Between 2000 to 2016, HMBANA milk banks distributed over 30 million ounces of pasteurized donor human milk with no record of illnesses or death.
- The use of nonprofit donor milk has more than doubled in the past five years alone, with 5.25 million ounces distributed in 2016.
- The number of HMBANA milk banks has more than tripled in the last decade, creating a robust, safe, and reliable supply of donor milk that was able to meet continued growing demand in 2016.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics’ (AAP) recent endorsement of the value of HMBANA donor milk is expected to promote continued growth in 2017, which the expanding network of HMBANA milk banks is poised to meet.

Key speakers included Jennifer Canvasser, executive director of the NEC Society, who focused on donor milk’s lifesaving capacity to reduce instances of necrotizing enterocolitis, the gut infection which is a primary killer of premature babies. Neonatologist Erin Hamilton-Spence, medical director of the Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas, discussed the intersection between neonatology and milk banking. The symposium also included a tour of the Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas.

HMBANA advances the field of non-profit milk banking through member accreditation, development of evidence-based best practices, and advocacy to ensure an ethically sourced and equitably distributed supply of donor human milk.

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