A LETTER FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TAKING 2020’S LESSONS IN RESILIENCE ONWARD

As the saying goes, the hardest part of moving forward is not looking back. In many ways, this phrase seems applicable; tackling 2020 at the milk bank was no easy feat. However, when I reflect on our strength and success during those twelve months, a more fitting figure of speech comes to mind: the only time you should ever look back, is to see how far you’ve come.

In January 2020, after a full year in our shiny, brand-new facility, we were filling our calendar with community education events while working to expand our mission. Weekly enrichment classes and breastfeeding support groups meant we had babies down the hall. Their coos (and cries) were music to our ears. The processing lab was in constant motion and life was golden in our world of liquid gold.

By February we were learning, with the rest of the world, about a novel virus called SARS-CoV-2, now referred to as COVID-19. We hit high gear in early March assessing safety for babies, donors, employees and visitors. We canceled events, reorganized workspaces, implemented alternatives and sadly, locked our doors to the public. Several staff members worked from home while numerous safeguards protected those needed on site.

As they say in Texas, “this wasn’t our first rodeo” confronting a public health crisis. When Ebola arrived in Dallas in 2014, we immediately analyzed scientific studies, modified donor screenings and participated in critical research that confirmed the effectiveness of pasteurization in inactivating Ebola and Marburg viruses.

When the Zika virus spread to North America in 2015, our milk processing protocols again enabled us to navigate yet another passing storm.

Then last spring, the COVID-19 pandemic hit like a monsoon and evolved quickly, without mercy. With experience and science backing us, three important factors proved crucial to moving our mission forward: specialized pasteurization, a caring community and a top-notch milk bank team. Here’s how:

OUR MILK IS SAFE.
Research confirms that Holder pasteurization inactivates the virus that causes COVID-19. Every bottle is heat treated to 62.5 degrees Celsius for 30 minutes, destroying pathogens and protecting the immunological properties so imperative for fragile infants.
OUR COMMUNITY IS BEHIND US.
Mothers have donated a lot of extra breastmilk. In 2020, 906 donors were screened and approved! Donating during the pandemic was, and still is, a unique way that lactating mothers can make a difference from the safety of their homes. This dedication and generosity stocks our freezers and enables us to meet the demand of North Texas NICUs.

Numerous organizations and foundations have gallantly responded to many of our urgent pandemic-related needs. Two brand-new transport vans have doubled our ability to pick up donations and make deliveries to hospitals.

The gift of three new industrial freezers expanded our storage when our huge walk-in freezer had suddenly, and remarkably, become too small.

COVID-19 relief funds from the City of Fort Worth and Tarrant County have covered a large portion of unbudgeted expenses for safe, at-home blood screenings and the increased need for shipping more frozen milk overnight.

OUR EMPLOYEES ARE SUPERSTARS.
Working for a nonprofit requires wearing many hats and this has never been more true than in 2020. Challenges in a crisis require stamina, flexibility and problem-solving skills. Staff members helped where needed, adapted to new policies and looked out for each other. Experiencing teamwork during a pandemic is truly a beautiful thing.

While 2020 is over, the pandemic rages on. But now, in 2021, we have hope. Like you, I am looking forward to something closer to normal such as typical days in the office, mom and baby yoga classes in our community education room, office birthday parties and in-person meetings. Until then, I will look ahead with gratitude and reassurance because I know how far we have already come.

Best wishes for recovery and healing in the months ahead,

Amy Vickers, RN, MSN, IBCLC
Executive Director
OUR MISSION

Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas strives to improve the health and survival of infants through breastfeeding advocacy and the safe, equitable provision of pasteurized donor human milk.

OUR VISION

Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas envisions a future when all babies have the opportunity to receive human milk.

2020 BY THE NUMBERS

569,370
ounces dispensed to babies in need

906
approved donor moms

75
hospitals served

48
milk drop off locations/depots

60,960
miles traveled picking up and delivering milk

96%
of milk dispensed to Texas hospitals
DOING OUR PART
TO ADVANCE EQUITY

To emphasize equity as a leadership-driven priority for Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas, the board of directors amended our mission statement in April 2019 to include “equitable provision of pasteurized donor human milk.” As issues of race, equity and social justice became defining features of 2020, we translated this amendment into tangible action.

A need for deeper awareness and effective strategies for change set the wheels in motion for the formation of the MMBNT Equity Task Force. We are very grateful for the employees, board members and community friends who have joined this important initiative.

This diverse and accomplished group has started the process of examining the external delivery of our mission and the ways we can improve internal diversity and inclusion. This will involve the comprehensive assessment of our donor milk services, recipients, messaging, community education tools and employment policies.

While our growing workforce of 20 employees might seem small, our community presence is extensive and our commitment to integrity is strong.

Donor mom Aiditi with her husband and Elina
CONQUERING A LIFE-THREATENING INFECTION IN THE NICU
HOW A PREEMIE’S SURVIVAL MOTIVATED HIS MOTHER TO GIVE BACK

Born early at 31 weeks in Abilene, Texas, Noah developed necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC), an intestinal disease with a high mortality rate that affects thousands of premature infants a year. The condition is all too common in hospital NICUs. It appears suddenly and advances quickly by causing inflammation and infection in the colon that can lead to tissue damage and death.

Noah’s case was urgent, so he was flown from Abilene to Cook Children’s Medical Center in Fort Worth for emergency surgery to remove the affected area of his intestine. His mother Alyssa now sees his scar as a reminder of how strong he has been since birth.

Throughout Noah’s 61-day hospital stay, Alyssa was encouraged to breastfeed due to the healing and immunological properties of breastmilk. However, for mothers of premature infants, this often isn’t easy. While Alyssa pumped every four hours to increase her supply, Noah was able to receive donor milk from Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas.

By the time Noah graduated from the NICU, Alyssa was exclusively breastfeeding and ended up with an excess supply of milk. She says, “I knew I wanted to give it back to the NICU to help babies like my son.”

After completing the three-step donor screening, Alyssa dropped off her frozen milk at Abilene Regional Hospital where it would be safely stored and transported to the milk bank. She says, “My first donation was the 1,800 ounces I pumped while Noah was in the NICU, so it was especially meaningful to me.”

“I am a full-time student and stay-at-home mom to the sweetest one-year-old boy who happens to be a NICU graduate. I hope our story educates others about NEC and how donor milk can help babies like Noah.” - Alyssa

For more information about NEC, visit www.necsociety.org.
Kristian is very similar to many of the donors at Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas. When mothers struggle to produce enough breastmilk for their own babies, donor milk becomes a miraculous and treasured gift. If they end up with an excess supply in the future, many moms pay it forward by donating to help other families.

“Becoming a donor has made me realize how precious a mother’s milk is. There is so much joy in not only being able to feed your own child, but in helping other mothers who may not be able to do the same.”

Kase and Keeton

Kristian’s first encounter with the power of human milk happened shortly after the birth of her first son, Kase. Kristian had been diagnosed with gestational diabetes, a condition when blood sugar levels become high during pregnancy.

Consequently, Kase was born with low blood sugar. Kristian says, “Donor milk was the only thing that helped get his blood sugar up so that we could take him home from the hospital.”

After struggling to maintain an adequate supply of breastmilk for Kase, Kristian’s breastfeeding journey with her second son, Keeton, was completely different. With lessons learned the first time around, she had a much more successful experience.

Kristian ended up with more milk than Keeton needed, and after learning about Mothers’ Milk Bank of North Texas from her Ob-Gyn, decided to become a milk donor. She says, “I’m so blessed to be able to help other babies like the mothers who donated milk to help Kase.”
GETTING HELP WITH BREASTFEEDING...

VIRTUALY

Our breastfeeding support group, Baby Café, went virtual in 2020. While the original program was designed to provide in-person guidance, COVID-19 challenged us to reach parents effectively online instead. Amanda Alvarez, our in-house lactation consultant, set up the new format and Virtual Baby Café was born.

Virtual Baby Café is designed to provide free breastfeeding education and support for families. Sessions are held twice a week and are designed to be casual and interactive. Discussions address all aspects of breastfeeding and its impact on daily life – from prenatal to weaning, as well as assistance with pumping and maintaining an adequate supply for working moms.

Amanda says, “While nothing can replace personal interactions and the opportunity to hold lots of babies, the virtual format has worked out quite well. I can evaluate what is going on through my computer screen and there is a big convenience factor for both the babies and parents getting help from the comfort of home.”

Supportive community partners for Baby Café include Abide Women’s Health Services, Dallas Area Breastfeeding Alliance and Tarrant County Breastfeeding Coalition.

Amanda Alvarez, In-house Lactation Consultant
OUR TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ashley Robbins
President

Rosie Balbo
Vice President & Treasurer

Susan Sward-Comunelli, MD, FAAP
Secretary & Founder

Patricia Alridge, BSN RNC-OB, MHA

Alondra Criss, MPH, RD, LD

Dara Dallas, MD

Bill Hallgren

Kelly Hanes
Gina Hill PhD, RD, LD

Emily Latiolais, NNP

Brian Meadors, PharmD, BCPS, BCPPS

Melissa O’Neill, RN-NIC, BSN

Erin Hamilton Spence, MD, IBCLC

Sarah Wetzler, MS, RD, LD, CSPCC, LD

Shanequa Williams, PharmD, MPH

Sally Zukoski, RN, IBCLC

STAFF

Amy Vickers, MSN, RN, IBCLC
Founding Executive Director

Shaina Starks
Director of Operations

Salvadora Estrada
Director of Programs

Leslie Leach
Director of Resources

Amy Trotter
Community Relations Director

Amanda Alvarez, MS, IBCLC
Education and Enrichment Manager

Fabiola Andrade
Donor Coordinator

Allanah Bennet
Pasteurization Technician

Casey Furgeson
Shipping and Receiving Technician

Danyel Jones-Minor
Pasteurization Technician

Pamela Lopez
Pasteurization Technician

Courtney Margotta
Program Coordinator

Samantha Martinez-Berlanga
Donor Program Supervisor

April Suarez Olivera
Community Relations Coordinator

Tina Passah
Pasteurization Technician

Nancy Sanchez Perez
Donor Coordinator

Judy Maltos Pesina
Pasteurization Technician

Lindsey Stecker
Lab Supervisor

Nancy Thomas
Courier

Carver Upton
Shipping and Receiving Lead
THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS FOR BRIGHTENING OUR YEAR!

FOUNDATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS & CORPORATIONS

Albertsons Safeway
Altar’d State Fort Worth
Amazon Smile Foundation
America’s Charities
The Benevolence Community Impact
Comunelli Family Fund
Customized Communications, Inc.
Dubose Family Foundation
Fash Foundation
Fidelity Charitable Giving
The Frill Foundation
Frontstream
Give inLieu Foundation
Kendra Scott Fort Worth/Clearfork Kroger Community Awards
Lockheed Martin AERO Cares
Mednax Pediatrics Medical Group, Fort Worth Neonatology
The Michael and Elizabeth Stevener Charitable Fund
Nancy and John Snyder Fund
The National Leadership Foundation
Network for Good/Facebook Fundraiser
The Ninnie L. Baird Foundation
North Texas Community Foundation
Parker Analytical, Inc
Sally & Scott Mooring III Charitable Fund
Social Running
Texas Instruments
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas
United Way of Tarrant County
Your Cause

The Benbrook Economic Development Corporation approved a matching storefront-improvement grant for the installation of eco-friendly landscaping in 2021, including the addition of 15 trees.

Through the North Texas Cares COVID-19 collaborative, the DuBose Family Foundation and United Way of Metropolitan Dallas doubled our donor milk transportation capabilities with a gift of two new vans. (pictured below)

Tarrant County and the City of Fort Worth provided COVID-19 relief funds through Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) assistance programs.
INDIVIDUALS

IN KIND*
Amy Aaron
Kathy Adcock-Smith
Patricia Alridge
Stella Amaechi
Andrea & Adam Arabie
Sharnet Arberry
Joel Baden
Rosie Balbo
Anjanette Butler
Lauren Butschek
Michelle Caraballo
Anastasia Cavanaugh
Amanda Cernicek
Amanda Clark
Sharon Cooper
Jordan Covington
Pamela Cox
  in honor of Dr. & Mrs. Alan Roberts
Molli Crenshaw
  in honor of Joy Crenshaw
Alondra Criss
David Cyklowski
Meredith Daigrepont
Dara Dallas, MD
Carolyn Dobson
Rae Doss
  in honor of
  Dr. & Mrs. Alan Roberts
Sarah Dudley
Kelley Durrant
M. Boone DuVall*
Christopher Ericson
Julie Etter
Amy Foster
Jennifer & Christopher Gage
Rebecca Gibson
  in memory of Henry Piccolo
Merrill Glasgow
  in honor of Gaylord Lummis
Christina Gorczynski
Barbara Greer
Bill Hallgren
Kelly Hanes
  in memory of Christian Kelly Hanes
Rachel Harrison
Gina Hill
Katie Hoefert
Amna Iftikhar
Carrie Ives
Yvette Johnson, MD
Prameela Karimi, MD
Mahathi Katragadda
Linda Kiraly
Jake & Gloria Kuykendall
Katelin Lanting
Emily Latiolais
Leslie Leach
Mary & Sammy Lewis
Philip Marinelli, DO
Brian Meadors
Dr. & Mrs. Darryl & Winjie Miao
Mary Miller
Melissa O’Neill
Joel & Kathy Parker
Kristen Parker
Melissa Parra
Adrian & Bianca Perez
Jyoti Rawat
Mary Ashley Ray
Mr. & Mrs. Bradley Richter
Ashley Robbins
Sarah Romack
Erica & Daniel Salzman
Margaret Sanders
Lisa Schiller
Jamie Schweitzer
  in honor of
  Dr. & Mrs. Alan Roberts
Sean and Brooke Scogin
Rebecca Skaparas
Kristin Sloane
Erin Hamilton Spence, MD
Melvin & Brenda Starks
Christi Stinson
Susan Sward-Comunelli, MD
Kim Terrell
Verral Tolia
Amy Trotter
Genna Tucker
Samantha Valadez
Amy Vickers
Kimberly Wagner
Brittany Walker
Sharon Washburn
Amanda Welky
Sarah Wetzler
Anna Williams
Shanequa Williams
Stephanie Whitman
  in memory of William O. Sward
Sarah Zamzow
Sally Zukoski
JOIN OUR MISSION:

Call us to donate your extra breastmilk: 817-810-0071

Make a gift to support our programs: texasmilkbank.org/donate

Volunteer to make a hands-on impact: a.trotter@texasmilkbank.org

Learn more about milk banking: www.texasmilkbank.org