

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Southeast Texas Invests in Donor Human Milk for Babies

BEAUMONT – *Feb. 20, 2019* – Mothers’ Milk Bank at Austin (MMBA), a nonprofit donor milk bank serving 200 hospitals nation-wide, will open its first milk depot for the Southeast Texas area on Thursday at the area’s only private outpatient lactation clinic, Best Fed Beginnings. The depot will make it easy for Southeast Texas moms to donate their extra expressed breast milk, which can be lifesaving for fragile, sick, or premature babies.

“Every year in the US, 72,000 babies are born premature or sick, putting them at risk of a serious and often fatal condition called Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC). Breast milk is the proven best food for all babies, and also decreases NEC risk by 75% for very tiny premature infants” says Kim Updegrove, MMBA Executive Director. Hospitals in Beaumont are committed to making donor human milk available for their fragile babies when moms’ own milk is unavailable, and now, thanks to Best Fed Beginnings, lactating women in the community can help make sure that the supply of milk is adequate to serve them.

Best Fed Beginnings, located on Gladys Avenue in Beaumont, is dedicated to empowering moms in the area to feed their children breastmilk. Kara Michael, Best Fed Beginnings’ owner and international board certified lactation consultant, identifies tongue and lip ties in infants with feeding difficulties, offers community breastfeeding classes, and provides individual lactation consultations. Her work in Baptist Hospital of SETX’s NICU drove her to contact MMBA with an offer to open a depot for area moms wanting to donate their expressed breastmilk to the milk bank. Until now, women in Beaumont who wanted to donate milk to save lives of babies born too soon, too small, or too sick, had to ship the milk to Austin themselves. The new milk depot makes it possible to drop off milk locally, and to have it couriered to the Mothers’ Milk Bank at Austin for processing. Best Fed Beginnings is making it easier for all Southeast Texas donors to donate this scarce resource that has life-saving impact.

“It’s never been easier to donate milk in Southeast Texas. Screening is free for all women currently breastfeeding infants under one year old. Once approved as a donor, Best Fed Beginnings will collect your milk donations and send them to MMBA where the milk is tested and pasteurized to make it safe for a vulnerable infant. It’s that easy to save a life” said Michael.

MMBA needs 1,500 donors to meet the expected 2019 need for donor human milk. Lactating women in Southeast Texas interested in donating their breast milk for the benefit of premature, ill and medically fragile infants may call toll-free 1-877-813-6455 or visit milkbank.org to become a donor.

Premature birth and its complications are the largest contributors to infant death in the U.S., and a major cause of long-term health problems in children who survive. Texas’ preterm birth rate is 10.6% and has been on the rise since 2016. The preterm birth rate among black women in Texas is 39% higher than the rate among all other women.

Premature infants spend their first weeks or months in hospital neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) where they receive special care and treatments. The availability of donor human milk, thanks to this new partnership between Best Fed Beginnings, area hospitals, and MMBA, marks a commitment to the health of our community’s most vulnerable population.

“Texans deserve a healthy start to life. They deserve human milk” said Updegrove.

About the Mothers’ Milk Bank at Austin

The Mothers’ Milk Bank at Austin is a non-profit organization whose mission is to save lives through providing prescribed pasteurized donor human milk. Healthy women who are lactating can donate milk to the Mothers’ Milk

Bank at Austin regardless of where they live once they pass the screening process. In 2018, the milk bank received donations from 1,180 women and pasteurized and dispensed 775,000 ounces of donor human milk. Prospective donors across the U.S. may call toll-free 1-877-813-6455. Learn more at www.milkbank.com.

About Best Fed Beginnings

Best Fed Beginnings Lactation Clinic is owned and operated by Kara Michael. Kara is a licensed occupational therapist and international board certified lactation consultant. She serves mamas and babies through her work in the NICU at Baptist Hospital of SETX and her outpatient lactation clinic. Best Fed Beginnings is located at 7905 Gladys Ave #102, Beaumont, TX 77706. The depot accepts breastmilk donations by appointment.

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