

South Carolina Chapter celebrates 10 Year Partnership With NICU Family Support at Greenville Hospital System!

As the first chapter to open March of Dimes NICU Family Support in its state ten years ago, the South Carolina chapter was the first to launch the ten year anniversary events on October 13th and 14th at Greenville Hospital System University Medical Center (GHS). Rachel Balck, EdD, the first ever NICU Family Support Specialist hired by March of Dimes, did a phenomenal job coordinating and rolling out all of the various activities with the national and regional offices and GHS. To mark the anniversary, educational seminars were held for nursing staff and neonatologists aimed at moving staff further along the family-centered continuum, led by Liza Cooper, Director, Family-Centered Care and Family Engagement, National Office, and Kara Gilardi, Regional Director, NICU Family Support, East Region. The various topics included making staff-parent communication sensitive and compassionate, a rationale for increasing the frequency of kangaroo care, a window into family-centered policies in our network of NICU Family Support sites, and a powerful parent panel in which one NICU mother shared "For 63 days you were my family, you were all we saw, you were all we knew, you were our family, what you did for my kid, changed my life."

Festivities culminated in a beautiful and elegant anniversary luncheon with more than 100 guests in the hospital atrium. Moving speeches were conducted about partnership and progress by GHS President and CEO Mike Riordan; Children's Hospital Medical Director Bill Schmidt, MD; NICU Medical Director Bryan Ohning, MD, PhD; South Carolina State Chapter Director Kathy Douglas; the first to receive a NICU Family Support Parent Care Kit ten years ago, the Webb family; and Director of Family-Centered Care and Family Engagement, Liza Cooper, LMSW, who shared in her remarks "Our work is not done. Our journey continues, so that each day is more supportive to NICU families than the day before. .. Thank you GHS for being our first."

Special congratulations to the South Carolina chapter – Paula Howell, Regional Vice President-East Region, who was State Director when the program first began; Kathy Douglas, State Director; Megan Branham, Director of Program Services; Rachel Balck, our very first (and current) NFS Specialist; Hope Lineau, NFS Specialist; Jacki Apel, Director of Communications; and Kara Gilardi, Regional Director, NICU Family Support- East Region for celebrating ten years of NICU Family Support in their state, supporting more than 7000 NICU families with education and comfort, and providing high-quality programs for all NICU Family Support sites to emulate.



All there at the beginning of NFS ; (Left to Right); Rachel Balck, 1st ever NFS Specialist; Liza Cooper, National Office, who launched the program in 2001; Amanda, Bill and Michelle (not pictured) Reeves, our 2004 national ambassador family, instrumental in building NFS in South Carolina.