Community Engagement Ideas

March of Dimes has been at the forefront of maternal and infant health. Through research, advocacy, and community partnerships, we work to create a healthier future for all moms and babies. Here are some of the ways in which we engage with our NICU, and we invite our partners, sponsors, companies, and teams to join us!

Going Home Bags

This activity creates packages for parents to take with them as they leave the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Your group can get creative to celebrate this moment and help parents take home items that they need to make the transition a little easier.

Book Drive

This activity is a book collection so parents can read to their babies in the NICU and/or provide books for big brother and big sister to enjoy while visiting their sibling. All books should be new and unused.

Sibling Kits

Volunteers put together activity kits for siblings, so they have something fun to do while the rest of the family focuses on bonding with their new baby in the NICU. You can provide games, books, puzzles, and more in sibling kits.

Meals that Matter

Knowing where your next meal is coming from should be the last thing parents in the NICU have to worry about. Providing a meal is simple, yet nourishing to the mind, body and soul. We all know how far a good meal and community support goes to feel less alone on their journey.

Beasley's Buckets

Carefully curated buckets, filled with items aimed at brightening the days of NICU families. From cozy socks, gas cards, or food gift cards, to tokens of encouragement that bring smiles, each bucket is a reminder that families are not alone on their journey.

Holiday Treats

Provide treats for families or healthcare staff around any holiday of the year. You can make candy bags for Valentine's Day, stuffed eggs for Easter, send treats for NICU Nurses' Week, or many other options. Check out of Calendar for details.

Calendar of Events

Check out our Engagement Calendar for all the holidays and awareness days that we support within the NICU. We encourage participation from our sponsors and partners to give back to our NICU families and healthcare professionals.

For more information, contact:

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

GOING HOME BAGS

What is it?

This activity creates packages for parents to take with them as they leave the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Your group can get creative to celebrate this moment and help parents take home items that they need to make the transition a little easier.

Why is important?

Going home from the hospital—and especially the NICU—can be a scary and uncertain time. These "Going Home" packages help families with the transition.

"GOING HOME" PACKAGE IDEAS:

This is a list of ideas but check with your NICU/hospital contact to see what the site might already have and what is most needed for parents as they are leaving the NICU. Each site differs in programming and could have limitations on what can be donated. New items only.

- Baby first aid kits
- Forehead and ear thermometers
- Bag (opportunity for your group to design the bag)
- Onesie, clothing (various sizes), socks, hats, etc. Please purchase in packs of 3 or 6.
- Toys, teething rings
- Picture frames and keepsakes (for entire family)
- Bottles, pacifiers, bibs and other feeding and travel accessories
- Wipes, diapers and skincare products
- Personal care items for parents
- March of Dimes will include resources – added information about sharing story and staying connected

SURPRISES & DELIGHT

If your volunteers are interested in adding a surprise to this activity or for the NICU/hospital partner, here are some ideas:

- Write a note of encouragement to the parents. These should be reviewed by the primary contact prior to ensure appropriate and sensitive language is used.
- Write "thank you" notes to the NICU staff for all their support of moms and babies.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

BOOK DRIVE

What is it?

This activity is a book collection so parents can read to their babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and/or provide books for big brother and big sister to enjoy while visiting their sibling.

This is the time to grab your favorite childhood reads, or books that help to explain the NICU journey and pass along the story to parents and their children.

Why is important?

Being in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) is a scary and uncertain time. Providing families with opportunities to connect with their children through reading is a special gift.

NICU babies still love and respond hearing their parents' voices. This helps promote bonding if parents aren't able to hold their little one.

BOOK & COLLECTION TIMING IDEAS:

Providing a book is such a special gift. Here are a few ideas for books your group can collect and natural times throughout the year to host a collection. If these don't work for your group, simply pick other times that work for you and the NICU/hospital partner. Books must be new and unused.

- Collect children's books in between or during your fundraising efforts.
  - Babies first board book
  - Books for siblings (consider a variety of reading and age levels)
  - Favorite childhood book
  - Newborn books (Oh, the Places You'll Go, The Very Hungry Caterpillar, The Rainbow Fish, Where the Wild Things Are, etc.)
- Here are couple ideas for timing:
  - March 2 - Dr. Seuss day – National Read Across America Day
  - November 1 – National Family Literacy Day

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SIBLING KITS

What is it?

Volunteers put together activity kits for siblings so they have something fun to do while the rest of the family focuses on bonding with their new baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

Why is important?

Big brother and/or big sister have been a part of this journey to the NICU. Parents want each child to feel cared for and special. These activity kits go a long way in helping with just that, and when siblings come to the hospital, they get their own little surprise!

ACTIVITY KIT IDEAS:

Check with your NICU/hospital contact to see what they might already have and what is most needed for sibling activities. Each site differs and could restrict donations.

- Coloring books
- Crayons/Colored Pencils
- Activity books
- Age-appropriate books
- T-shirts (big brother/big sister)
- Toys
- Snacks – goldfish, graham crackers, etc.
- Water, juice

SURPRISES & DELIGHT

If you or your volunteers are interested in adding a surprise to the kit or for the NICU/hospital partner, here are some ideas:

- Connect the activity to holidays, seasons, and/or special days (birthdays, etc.).
- Write a note of encouragement to the siblings. These should be reviewed by the primary contact prior to ensure to ensure appropriate and sensitive language is used.
- Write thank you notes to the NICU staff for all their support of moms and babies.
- Make/purchase gifts as keepsakes for families (birth stone jewelry, etc.).

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MEALS THAT MATTER

What is it?

A fun and delicious way to make a huge impact on the wellbeing of Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)/hospital partner staff and parents whose babies are in the NICU.

Meal donations must be restaurant catered meals or gift cards to a restaurant. No homemade meals.

Why is important?

Knowing where your next meal is coming from should be the last thing parents in the NICU have to worry about. Providing a meal is simple, yet nourishing to the mind, body and soul. We all know how far a good meal and community support goes to make parents feel less alone on their journey.

IDEAS FOR TIMING

Providing a meal is helpful at most times throughout the month or year and there are few extra days where your members can consider layering on a theme for the meal. This is also a great theme for donated sweet treats! Note: there are 35 beds in the SRHS NICU, so donors are encouraged to plan to provide for 70 individuals. An accurate number can be shared upon planning event.

- May: Mother's Day
- June: Father's Day
- September: NICU Nurses Week
- November: Thanksgiving
- December: Christmas

SURPRISES & DELIGHT

If your volunteers are interested in adding a surprise to the meal or activity with the NICU/hospital partner, here are some ideas:

- Collect more restaurant gift cards and leave a gift for the NICU staff and nurses.
- Write notes of encouragement for the new parents to be and give with the meal donation or if in person use as centerpieces for the meal. These should be reviewed by the primary contact prior to ensure appropriate and sensitive language is used.
- Ask for an in-kind table décor donations (no flowers) to have on the tables.

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beasley's buckets

"beasley's buckets" are carefully curated buckets of love, filled with thoughtful items aimed at brightening the days of NICU families. From cozy socks that provide warmth, gas cards, or food gift cards, to tokens of encouragement that bring smiles, each bucket is a reminder that families are not alone on their journey. Your organization can collect and donate any of the items listed. You can also purchase from the Amazon Wishlist.

COLLECT NEW/UNUSED ITEMS:

- Travel-size deodorant
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Face wipes
- Gift cards for gas, coffee, local restaurants
- Unscented lotion
- Lance crackers or snacks
- Pen or pencil
- Dry shampoo
- Chapstick
- Gum or mints
- Hand sanitizer
- Small packets of tissues
- Cozy socks
- Water bottle
- Calming teas

Your organization can purchase and arrange pickup or delivery, or you can send via the Amazon Wishlist here

THANK YOU!

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MARCH OF DIMES LEADS THE FIGHT FOR THE HEALTH OF ALL MOMS AND BABIES.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

MONTHLY ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR

1 JANUARY

March for Babies Registration/Launch
Birth Defects Awareness Month

2 FEBRUARY

Valentine's Day – send Valentine-Grams to the NICU
Valentine's Onesies

3 MARCH

St. Patrick's Day
Leprechaun Treats to NICU

4 APRIL

Easter Eggs to the NICU
Easter Onesies to NICU
Black Maternal Health Week
Superhero Day/Week
Volunteer Appreciation Week

5 MAY

Mother's Day Flowers or Craft to NICU
Nurses' Week
Maternal Mental Health Month
Pre-eclampsia Awareness Week

6 JUNE

Father's Day Footprint craft

7 JULY

Independence Day

8 AUGUST

National Breastfeeding Month

9 SEPTEMBER

NICU Awareness Month
NICU Nurses Week

10 OCTOBER

National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Day (10/15) and Month
Halloween Costumes to NICU

11 NOVEMBER

Prematurity Awareness Month
World Prematurity Day
Days of Gratitude
Thanksgiving Meal to NICU
National Family Literacy Day

12 DECEMBER

Holiday Season
Christmas Cards to NICU and Staff
Holiday Meal to NICU
Christmas Craft

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