



The Gerber Foundation Neonatal Center (NICU)

On September 18, LEAD members and guests took part in an impactful presentation and tour of The Gerber Foundation Neonatal Center, otherwise known as the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital (HDVCH). The Learning Session was led by Joan Rikli, nursing director for neonatal intensive care and pediatric services at HDVCH. The Gerber Foundation Neonatal Center (NICU) provides the highest degree of quality care for at-risk newborns as a Level 4 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. LEAD was able to get a behind-the-scenes tour of the NICU, including the Small Baby Unit (SBU), which cares for preemies born between 22-27 weeks and weigh less than 2 pounds.

The NICU not only supports the medically complex needs of these newborns but gives their parents and siblings the encouragement they need through the parent-to-parent program and Super Sibs, a program facilitated by child life specialists. It is helpful for these families to have the support of others who have been down the same path of having a child in the NICU.



We were also joined by Erin Brewer who shared her family's journey in the NICU with her twin boys, Frederick and Graham, who were born at 33 weeks gestation and spent the first few weeks of their lives in the NICU. Freddie and Graham are now happy and healthy three-year olds living their best lives with their older brother George!

Philanthropy plays an important role in the ability of The Gerber Foundation Neonatal Center to support each newborn and their family. You will have the opportunity to support this program at our allocation event in November, but there are some immediate needs we wanted to share with you as well. The NICU welcomes gifts of teddy bears (to be given to the mothers to take home and snuggle while their baby is still in the hospital), gift cards, meal trays for nursing moms who need extra calories and cannot afford the additional cost of food, and rapid genome testing for newborns whose diagnosis is unknown. Please consider allocating your LEAD gift to this important program so they can work towards making sure women across Michigan have access to breast care.