Bump Watch: Breast milk donors wanted in Lane County

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SPRINGFIELD, Ore. - Choosing to breast feed your baby comes with its benefits.

Yes, it's more cost effective, but that's just a small piece of the puzzle.

Doctors say breast milk is the best option for your newborn.

And for women who can't produce enough milk, or for infants hospitalized away from their mothers, donated milk is an option.

Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend is introducing the first ever milk bank drop site in Lane County.

"The demand for purchased donor milk from milk banks has really gone up in the last several years," said Rebecca Bent, director of the neonatal intensive care unit at RiverBend. "There are times that we have to shop around to different milk banks to be able to get enough."

The hospital has been using donor milk for more than a decade. They use more than 300 gallons of donor milk a year, which costs nearly $85,000.

Donor milk helped nourish Shantele Lemmon's daughter, who was born six weeks early.

Lemmon had a condition called HELLP Syndrome, which required her to have an emergency c-section. Her daughter Kenli was admitted to the NICU and was fed with donor milk until Lemmon's own milk came in.

Now, Lemmon is wanting to help other moms.

"It helped me so much," she said, "so obviously I want to help any of the other moms that have a premature baby or just need it in general."

The new drop site will make it easier for local moms to donate their milk.

"They don't have to worry about shipping," said Jana Langeliers, who coordinates the program. "We do all of that. And we send it to Northwest Mother's Milk Bank in Portland and they test it, pasteurize it, and get it ready for hospitals like us or for some private
purchase."

Moms must pass a brief interview and blood test to ensure the safety of the milk they're providing.

If you're interested in being a donor, you must contact the Northwest Mother's Milk Bank at (800) 204-4444 to schedule a screening interview. If approved, potential donors will then undergo a prepaid blood test screening. Then you'll get an ID number.