

The Mother's Own Milk (MOM) Project

An Update and Discussion





What is the MOM Project?

- A low cost hospital grade breast pump rental for families at the Foothills Medical Centre (FMC) Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
- Families pay \$5/calendar month for the breast pump rental and the cost of the accessories needed to make our pumps compatible with their hospital-issued kits
- Currently, the funding for the MOM Project comes from the local ministries fund and from “ear-marked” donations from congregation members. This project is 100% Calgary congregation funded at present
- We have several volunteer knitters and crotchetiers who donate beautiful baby blankets and hats to give each family



Why do we do this?

- A mother's breast milk is uniquely designed for her baby and provides perfect nutrition, immune system benefits, and is the healthiest food for developing digestive systems
- When a baby is born sick or premature the mother needs to use a hospital grade breast pump every 3-4 hours to establish and maintain her breast milk supply
- Commercial rentals cost \$70-100/month from pharmacies and there is very little cost assistance available for families in financial need
- By providing a low cost rental we are helping babies get the best nutrition, empowering mothers to provide breast milk for their child, and give them the ability to *choose* between breast feeding and formula; not be forced into formula because she was unable to sustain her milk supply

Low income families are identified by the hospital social worker or lactation consultant, and they provide the program contact information to them. This is the only source of the contact information to ensure that we are only providing the service to families most in need.

The mothers contact the program by phone or email, and a coordinator completes an intake form and double checks that the mother meets the program's criteria

The MOM Project coordinators meet the mother to drop off the pump, show her how to use it, and give simple teaching on how to manage her breast milk and supply

Mothers make payment to the program for \$5/calendar month and can contact the program for support at any time. They are also provided with contact information for breastfeeding resources in Calgary

When the mother is finished with the pump (generally several weeks after the baby is discharged home) she contacts the coordinators and they pick up the pump from her.



How does
it work?



Who does this?

- Currently, Cindy Larsen and Caitlin d'Esterre are the only volunteers for the program.
- Caitlin coordinates email/text contacts with moms, provides pumping education if needed, manages the paperwork and comes up with big brained ideas
- Cindy answers telephone inquiries and does 90% of the drop offs and pickups (Caitlin always seems to be working)
- Our blanket team work at their leisure and always supply us with beautiful work! Caitlin has taken up crocheting as well...



What are the statistics?

- The program launched in March 2017
- As of September 24th 2017 we have provided pumps to 16 mothers who have in turn provided their milk to a total of 19 babies. At least one of our mothers has donated some of her milk to the Northern Star Milk Bank.
- We have had rentals lasting from 20 days to 6 months
- Most of the babies we are helping are born less than 30 weeks gestation (two and a half months premature)
- Some of our mothers have other children, but most are first time moms
- About 1/4 of our moms are single or do not have a live-in partner
- Most of our moms have **chosen** to feed formula once her baby has come home due to the complicated feeding of premature babies



What about the cost?

- The initial proposal sent to the congregation asked for a budget of **\$2129.60** and was meant to cover 6 pumping kits, a per-mother consumables cost of \$31.25 and serving 20 mothers in a 12 month period
- This was before the addition of the baby blankets (we currently purchase the wool for our knitters) which has become an important way to engage those within and outside our congregation
- It was also before we realised we needed almost double the original number of pumps...
- And that our consumable cost per mother was actually going to be more like \$35...
- And that we were going to serve 16 mothers in 6 months...

What about the cost? Cont'd





GREAT NEWS!!!

We just received a huge donation from a breast pump supply company!

50 sets of back low prevention valves

15 sets of pump tubing

10 sets of adaptors (only needed with brand new pumping kits)

7 pairs of uniquely sized breast shields

What are the future plans?

- Expand to other hospitals?
- Expand to be Calgary wide (ie not just NICUs)?
- Expand to other cities?
- Social/government action?
- Stay small?

NICU mom status:
1. Need to pump
2. Pumping
3. Finished pumping
4. Calculating how much Kcare is left before it's time to pump again.

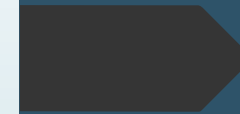
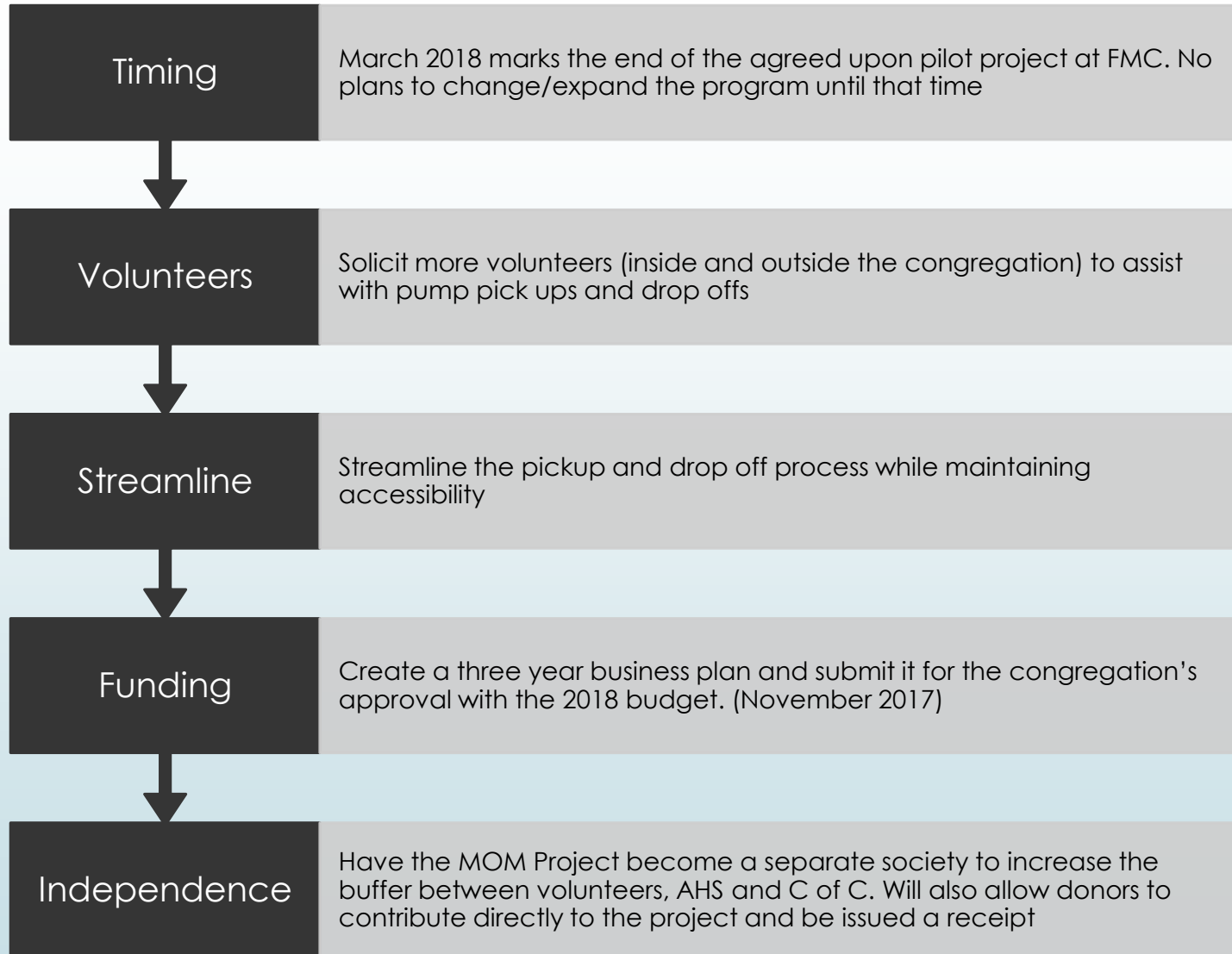
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Thoughts for moving forward

- Sustainability!
- Financial: We want the program to be charitable, but not give away a good thing for free. It is also important to consider investment/start up costs **and** ongoing costs
- Personnel: Volunteer hours are averaging 1-6 hours per week. Volunteers must have a vehicle, be comfortable going to a stranger's home and create an open and secular relationship with these moms
- A program that cannot replace the cost of its disposables is not sustainable...
- This issue is bigger than we ever imagined...
- How do we enact social change to provide this service to everyone that needs it without exhausting our resources?



Plans for
moving
forward



Who wants to help, and how?

- Opportunities to volunteer your time (again, must have a vehicle, be comfortable discussing breast pumping, be okay with going to stranger's homes, and respect the secular nature of the program)
- Provide funds. Currently you can designate your local contributions to the MOM Project in your weekly tithing, or you can make lump sum donations to the congregation designated to the project
- Write a letter to your MLA! I have drafted a letter advocating for more affordable access to breast pump rentals and breastfeeding support, and compiled a list of MLAs who would most likely be receptive. If you prefer, you may write your own and I can provide you with addresses. No postage required!
- Share your ideas for expansion and program management with me!
- Sign up sheets for volunteers and letter writers/signers

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Thank you for all of
your support!

it's a
**preemie
thing** 

miracles come in
small packages