

# MIZZOU

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## Alumni Profile

### One doctor's milky way

High-tech medicine offers solutions to many of the health problems faced by prematurely born babies. But when it comes to nutrition, nothing comes close to mothers' milk, says Barbara Carr, MD '93, a [Pediatrix Medical Group](#) neonatologist at St. Luke's hospital in Kansas City, Mo. To help babies get what they need, Carr and her colleagues are establishing a human milk bank and are currently functioning as a milk bank depot.

"Preemies' immune systems are not fully developed," Carr says. "For their special nutritional needs, human milk is best. It is more easily digested, protects the lining of the intestines and helps their immune system develop more normally." Carr could make a long list of breastfeeding benefits for both mothers and their babies, such as lower rates of obesity and chronic diseases including cancer. "It's really what nature intended," she says.

But mothers of preemies are not always able to lactate or provide enough milk to meet their babies' needs due to their own medical conditions. So, Carr has recruited a network of milk donors.

"These are women who have excess milk. Pumping is hard work, and women don't want to just throw this milk away," Carr says. "They know the benefits human milk provides to infants. Some of the donors are moms who had preemies who passed away. So they pump because they want to help others. It's a very altruistic thing to do."

In addition to submitting to screenings and blood testing, donors must pump the milk, freeze it and drop it off at the hospital. Then it goes to Denver, one of only 10 processing centers, to be combined with other milk, which is pasteurized and distributed by the [Human Milk Banking Association of North America](#) (HMBANA). "We've tried to streamline the process to



Neonatologist Barbara Carr, MD '93, of Kansas City, Mo., helps babies get the best food of all — mothers' milk. Photo by Rob Hill




make it as easy as possible for the donating women,” she says.

Although Carr’s neonatal intensive care unit does not charge patients for the milk itself, the hospital pays the Mother’s Milk Bank of Denver a processing fee that can run as much as \$4.50 an ounce. “It’s not cheap, but if having that milk prevents a case of late onset infection or necrotizing enterocolitis that could extend the hospital stay two to four weeks, then it’s worth it.”

Carr’s next goal: Raise money for St. Luke’s to become HMBANA’s 11th processing center in the U.S. — *Dale Smith*

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