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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BUILDING BRIDGES

PREEMIE RECEIVES AUGMENTED MILK SOURCE AS BREASTFEEDING BRIDGE

GREENSBURG, PA, February 7, 2020 – Donated breast milk from the Pittsburgh-based Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank was used for "bridge" breastfeeding of a premature baby born at Excela Health Westmoreland on February 3, 2020.

When Ian and Samantha Wirth's baby Ayla was born five weeks pre-term, there was a need to augment the milk supply because the mother's had not yet fully developed. A supplemental source of milk was required.

Breast milk is very important for premature babies.

Neonatologist Andrea Willeitner, MD, IBCLC, FAAP, and Medical Director of Excela Health Level II, Special Care Nursery said: "Pre-term babies who are breastfed are less likely to develop intestinal infections than are babies who are formula-fed.

"The milk Samantha Wirth is producing in these first few days contains high concentrations of antibodies to help her daughter fight infection," added Dr. Willeitner who is also a board certified lactation consultant and has assisted Excela Health's maternal child nursing team in advancing breastfeeding education and support among expectant mothers and post-delivery.

Typically, the Milk Bank serves Levels III and IV Newborn Intensive Care Units (Excela Health is a Level II Special Care Nursery), making this instance the first time in our region that a Level II unit received a "bridge" supplement.

However, donated human milk may be used in healthy term babies as well to facilitate the transition to exclusive breastfeeding when mother's milk supply has yet to fully develop. Feeding human milk only, as compared to formula, which is made from cow milk, has multiple health benefits for both infant and mother, way beyond the nursing period.

The Wirth family of Hempfield Township marked two firsts with one birth at Excelsa Health's Special Care Nursery. Baby Alya's breathing was aided by the noninvasive bubble CPAP respiration system after her birth and she then benefitted from donated mother's milk supply as a "bridge" in this situation.

Annually, more than 1,260 babies are delivered at Excelsa Health's Family Additions Maternity Center, which also delivers award-winning quality care and is recognized by the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Keystone 10 Initiative, which aims at improving the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding for all Pennsylvania infants, mothers and families.

The Pittsburgh-based Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank is a non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the health and survival of medically vulnerable infants by providing pasteurized donor breast milk. Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank serves facilities and families of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New Jersey, and Maryland.

A milk bank depot at Excelsa Square in Norwin is affiliated with Mid-Atlantic Mothers' Milk Bank, previously known as Three Rivers Mothers' Milk Bank.

Excelsa Health, a 578-bed, tertiary-based health System in Westmoreland County, PA, includes three hospitals – Excelsa Westmoreland Hospital, Excelsa Latrobe Hospital and Excelsa Frick Hospital – and serves more than 23,000 inpatients, 700,000 outpatients and 100,000 emergency visits annually. With more than 700 physicians and allied health professionals and 4,800 employees, Excelsa is a regional leader in clinical areas such as Cardiovascular Disease, Orthopedics and Emergency Medicine.

The System has been recognized by U.S. News & World Report among the nation's Best Regional Hospitals and achieved Magnet Recognition[®], the highest honor for nursing professionalism and superior patient care given by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

For more information, visit www.ExcelaHealth.org