

Left to right,
Deborah O'Halloran
and Ann Hilger from
Second Stork.



A Good Start

Second Stork delivers essential newborn supplies to mothers in need.

» **SECOND STORK** is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Saint Paul that serves families in crisis through hospitals in Minnesota. An all-volunteer organization, Second Stork gives essential items to new parents who are struggling to get started on the right foot with a newborn.

Social workers or nurses identify the families in need. The gifts include safety-approved play yard with a bassinet, newborn clothing and receiving blankets, and

a bag with 100 diapers, wet wipes, baby wash, diaper rash cream and related items. Not every family needs all these things—Second Stork gives parents only what they need.

The organization has no religious or political affiliation. They offer a small gift at a difficult time—to make things a little less frightening for women who have financial worries as well as the usual emotional stresses of caring for a tiny new baby.



For more information and to donate or volunteer go to SecondStork.org
f Second Stork

Deb O'Halloran is co-founder and president of the board of Second Stork and she says that, while the practical gifts are very important, the parents are also lifted up a bit by just getting a gift. "Knowing that a stranger cares about you and your baby gives these women hope that they can find the support they need," O'Halloran says.

Social workers tell O'Halloran that in many of these cases, this is the only gift a new parent will receive. "These are women who haven't had baby showers," O'Halloran says. "They don't have family coming to the hospital to bring a nice onesie for the new baby to wear home."

"These small gifts always appear as huge gifts to the families who receive them at Children's Minnesota," says Elisabeth Wells, clinical social worker, adding that it can be especially gratifying for mothers whose babies have experienced early health challenges.

"Being in the neo-natal intensive care unit is an emotional and stressful time. Not only are the mothers often in a vulnerable place in their lives, but many times they were not expecting to have their baby yet, giving birth prematurely. Or they have spent the last several weeks terrified that their new baby would die and never make it home," says Wells. "Being able to bring a bag of diapers or an outfit to wear home or down to their baby's room before they discharge is always my favorite part of the job, as the relief you see on the parent's face is huge."

Ann Hilger is a volunteer and board member who handles communication and marketing, as well as volunteering for daily operational work. She echoes O'Halloran's feeling that the gifts do more than fill a practical need. "We are taking care of a mother's spirit as well," she says.

Social worker Beth Larson sees relief and a new feeling of trust on the faces of mothers when she brings them a gift from Second Stork. "I have noticed their stress levels decrease and they become more confident about working with additional community programs" for themselves, the baby and the family, Larson says. **SPM**

BY DANA
BEDINGFIELD

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