



In February of 2001, seven extraordinary women announced the birth of a new nonprofit, in southeast Lincoln. In that original 100 square feet of space, those seven women, surrounded by mismatched donated furniture and secondhand computers, worked tirelessly towards their vision to create healthier communities for breastfeeding families, and built what is now known as MilkWorks. In the 20 years since, MilkWorks has been trusted with the care, and invited into the lives, of thousands of families. After many expansions, including a new MilkWorks location in Omaha, and outreach centers across Nebraska, it is hard not to reflect on the road that

got us where we are today. A lot has changed at MilkWorks over the years, but what will always remain is the unwavering support we give to our families and the relationships we have built with our community members, healthcare providers, and breastfeeding advocates alike. All of us coming together to create a healthier community, by helping families' breastfeed their babies.



When MilkWorks opened its doors, there was much work to be done. While [Le Leche League groups had been well established](#) in the U.S since the late 1950's, this vision of a comprehensive breastfeeding center focused on

providing evidence-based care with medically trained professionals, caring staff, and necessary breastfeeding equipment was uncharted territory. There was no how-to guide to follow, so our founders wrote the guide themselves out of a foundation of friendship, breastfeeding advocacy, and a desire to be accessible and supportive of all families.



In the last 20 years, Nebraska has seen a massive shift in the day-to-day struggles of pregnant and breastfeeding people. The introduction of the

Affordable Care Act in 2010 put a spotlight on preventative medicine, with a massive [call to action on breastfeeding education reform](#). By 2012, lactation care and breast pumps were an insurance covered preventative medicine service and today more families initiate and exclusively breastfeed than ever before.

Breastfeeding rates have risen from an 11% 6-month breastfeeding exclusivity rate in 2004, to an over 25% exclusivity rate at 6-months in 2019. And for MilkWorks specifically, mothers who were seen for a breastfeeding consultation in 2018 and 2019 had a breastfeeding exclusivity rate of 82% at 3 months, and 74% at 6 months. That is over double the [state and national average](#). Mothers also have [more rights in public and the workplace](#), thanks to the collaborative leadership of state officials and breastfeeding advocates, including MilkWorks.





As MilkWorks enters its next 20 years, there is still much work to be done. We know our mission and shared goals of providing exceptional, inclusive care will keep us moving forward as it always has. We have kept our doors open for in-person care during the pandemic and opened the doors to virtual care. We went back to our roots – scrappy, creative, and determined to make it work for the families who needed us to be there for them. By late March, our Lactation Consultants were seeing clients for telehealth appointments, and our Breastfeeding Educators were taking call after

call from parents in need. We implemented free shipping for breast pumps and pump supplies, a policy we permanently implemented, thanks to generous donations, to ensure more access to breastfeeding supplies for Nebraskan families. All classes and support groups have been virtual since March, and staff that can work from home still do, to keep our families as safe as possible. No one could have foreseen COVID-19 so we had to write the how-to guide for lactation support, just as our founders did, when they took a chance on MilkWorks in 2001.



MilkWorks, over the next 20 years, will look different than it has in the past and we embrace that. What we have learned is that, if women do not have support - be it family, friends, or healthcare providers - breastfeeding, and even child rearing, is a much steeper hill to climb. That every feeding and parenting journey is unique. The



same services and support that work for some, will not work for everyone and it is our job to support and advocate for all families. As a non-profit, we do all that we can to provide support for families, regardless of insurance coverage, ability to pay, or where they live or work. That means looking for new ways to support our community by working alongside other breastfeeding organizations to help change the narrative of racial and income disparities in breastfeeding and healthcare and it means asking [for you to continue to support MilkWorks](#) as we strive to provide the best resources and support for each family who needs us.

The foundation that MilkWorks has laid for our community is wide spread. Roots need to be nurtured to grow and that growth takes time, sometimes years to finally bear the fruit of its labor. MilkWorks' journey has been a labor of love. As it passes down to a new generation, it is time for this beloved organization to continue its journey by doing what we do best- Nurturing. By listening before acting. By empowering before leading. And by coming together so no one falls apart alone.