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## LOCAL NEWS



### Pick up a bottle

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## LOCAL NEWS

### Mobile library

JPL On-the-Go van makes appearance at Kidz Fest in downtown Joliet / 5

## SPORTS



### Playing for gold

Sophia Smith scores in extra time to lift U.S. into Paris Olympics final / 22

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# HEALTHY, HAPPY BABIES

## New Lenox hospital hosts first reunion of NICU graduates and babies' immediate families / 3

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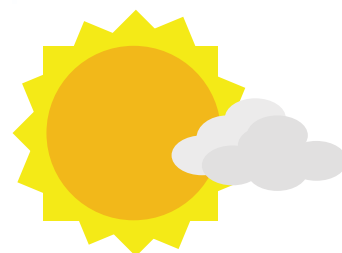


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## TODAY'S WEATHER



**HIGH**  
**79**  
**LOW**  
**60**

Complete forecast on page 10

# THRIVING BABIES

Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox hosts 1st NICU reunion

By DENISE M. BARAN-UNLAND  
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A Joliet baby who spent six months at Silver Cross Hospital after her premature birth returned triumphantly Sunday.

Silver Cross, in New Lenox, hosted its first reunion of graduates of the Amy, Matthew and Jay Vana Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the babies' immediate families.

Attendees included Nyla Brooke Haywood and her parents, NaKeya Moffett Haywood and Cory Haywood.

Nyla was born Nov. 17, 2023, at 22 weeks and three days. She weighed 1.1 pounds and measured 11 inches long. She went home for the first time the day after Mother's Day.

NaKeya Moffett Haywood said Nyla is doing really well.

"She's completely off oxygen," she said.

Silver Cross Hospital's Level III, 24-bed neonatal intensive care unit opened in 2022, adjacent to the birthing center, and is modeled from the NICU at the Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, according to Silver Cross.

Festivities on Sunday included a group photo, games, refreshments and the opportunity for families to mingle with the staff who cared for their babies in the NICU.

Peggy Farrell, director of the NICU and lactation services, said 20 Silver Cross staff from many disciplines "were here to celebrate and to reconnect with families."

Dr. Mario Sanchez, a neonatal-perinatal specialist at Silver Cross, said he expected about 250 attendees among babies and immediate family members.

"It's always great to see some of these babies come back," Sanchez said. "We're able to see how they're doing and how their parents are happy and not stressed."

Dr. Brett Galley, a neonatologist at Silver Cross, said it was "incredible" to be among so many families the NICU helped at one time.

"I'm so glad to see these kids so happy," Galley said. "I hardly recognize the babies, but I recognize the families."

Dr. Corryn Greenwood, medical director of Silver Cross' NICU, said she was filled with emotion seeing babies who were born weighing only 1 pound now coming in at 22 pounds.



Photos by Denise M. Baran-Unland

Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox held its first reunion of Amy, Matthew and Jay Vana Neonatal Intensive Care Unit graduates and the babies' immediate families Sunday. Pictured are (from left) Kristen Sher of Orland Park; her son, Aaron Sher, who was born at 27 weeks; and Neecie Jensen, digital marketing specialist at Silver Cross.

"It's so amazing to see how our babies are thriving," Greenwood said.

Aaron Scher of Orland Park was one of those babies. He was born Nov. 30, 2023, at 27 weeks and now weighs "almost 16 pounds," said his mother, Kristen Sher.

Nine-month-old Nature Branch came to the celebration with her parents and two sisters.

"At 31 weeks I went into labor," said Chanelle Branch, Nature's mother. "She had great care. She was here for 35 days."

Dillon Spratt of Oak Forest said he and his wife, Brittany Spratt, chose Silver Cross on purpose. Although Brittany's pregnancy was normal,



Sunday's festivities included a group photo, games, refreshments and the opportunity for families to mingle with the staff who cared for their babies in the NICU.

the couple wanted to deliver their daughter Sadie in a hospital with a NICU, just in case, Dillon Spratt said. It was the right decision for them.

Sadie was born March 21 weighing only 1.7 pounds and now weighs 8½ pounds, Dillon Spratt said. "She's doing wonderful," he said.