

march of dimes®

We Stand for Babies



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March of Dimes Delaware Chapter
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Special Promotional Supplement to

DELAWARE
TODAY®

We Stand for Babies. All Babies.

Each year more than 1,500 babies in Delaware and 525,000 babies nationally are born prematurely, causing serious lifelong challenges for some and death for others. In an average week in Delaware, 231 babies are born. Of them, 32 are born prematurely, 21 are of low birth weight, and two will die before their first birthday.

Premature birth is the leading cause of death in the first month and year in newborns, and yet the reasons for nearly half of those premature births are unknown. We are committed to finding the answers. We're the March of Dimes.

And we dream of a day when every baby is born healthy.

March of Dimes has been on a mission to improve the health of babies and children since 1938, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt set out on a quest to defeat polio. When polio was eradicated by the Salk vaccine 17 years later, with the help of \$25.5 million in March of Dimes-funded research, March of Dimes broadened its focus to preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

We don't do it alone, though. We're strengthened by individual volunteers, families, corporate sponsors, and partner organizations whose participation in and support of our events throughout the year help to raise awareness and fund programs of research, education, community service and advocacy.



March of Dimes research funding has furthered medical advances in the areas of drug therapy for heart defects, surgical techniques on babies in the womb for things such as spina bifida and other spinal cord malformations, drug therapy for brain-damaging newborn jaundice, surfactant therapy for immature lungs, AZT drug therapy for the prevention of HIV transmission from mother to child, and significant advances in nitric oxide treatment to regulate blood flow and pressure in the lungs of critically ill babies.

Throughout Delaware, March of Dimes educates more than 1,000 to 1,200 women a year about the importance of consuming folic acid (known to prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord if taken during early preg-

nancy as neural tubes are developing) and about the importance of prenatal care. In addition, more individuals receive prenatal education within their local communities as partner organizations receive financial support through our community grants program.

Medical professionals also benefit from March of Dimes educational programs on preventing preterm labor and from training in cultural competency aimed at improving their effectiveness when caring for families.

To find out more about the resources we provide pregnant women and their babies, or for information about how you can help us to help others, call 225-1020 or visit www.marchofdimes.com/delaware.

—Susan Oates

The Kumpons are one of the top fundraising families for March of Dimes Delaware. Samuel spent the first 86 days of his life in the neonatal intensive care unit at Christiana Hospital. During that time, the family received support from the March of Dimes' NICU Family Support Program.



Supporting Families

When a child must live in neonatal intensive care, March of Dimes is there to help. by Susan Oates

Like most people, Elsje Kumpon recognized the March of Dimes name and had a general understanding of its mission, but confesses that even when giving birth to triplets at 26 weeks, March of Dimes didn't cross her mind. "But nothing crossed my mind," says Kumpon. "We were in shock."

The Kumpons' two daughters died at one and four days old. Son Samuel spent the first 86 days of his life in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at Christiana Hospital. It was there that the Kumpon family was touched by the March of Dimes through the NICU Family Support Program.

"Their support was very subtle because it was a very traumatic time," says Kumpon. "Christmas ornaments

and a Valentine's Day card with Samuel's footprints appeared on the Isolette, and a photographer took photos for our family. March of Dimes was in the background, gently supporting us, and now I have all of these little things to document Samuel's time in the NICU when I was too occupied to do it myself."

The angel delivering goodness like shoe-making elves in the night was NICU family support specialist Kelly Cover. Her role in this program, which launched in 2004, is to provide information and comfort to families during an infant's NICU stay, the transition home, and in the event of a newborn's death. That's where Cover finds her master's degree in psychology and experience as a grief counselor helpful. And as a

former NICU mom, she's sensitive to the emotions parents of preemies feel. "I know what it's like to stare at an Isolette for hours on end," she says, "and it helps me to better understand how to support these families."

Cover tells of one mom who was too nervous to touch her baby. "I put my hand on hers, put our hands through the door of the Isolette and said, 'Let's do it together.'" It's a touching example of what the program is all about: education, support, and helping family members feel a part of the healthcare team and comfortable with caring for their babies.

Experts share knowledge during regularly scheduled "parent hours," support parent-to-parent interactions,

and distribute Parent Care Kits—totes containing useful items such as an NICU guide book that explains the medical machinery and tests that may be used, as well as tissues, a journal, pens and personal items. Sibling Saturdays give younger family members a feeling of inclusion as they learn about what’s happening and how they can help when the baby comes home.

Family dinners on the first Thursday of each month serve as a warm reminder to parents to take care of their own health, too. And as they look up from the Isolette and across the dinner table, they see that they’re not alone.

“I’ve come to realize that there are a lot of premies born and pregnancies in peril, and March of Dimes is doing a lot to make it better,” says Kumpon.

With gratitude and a newfound awareness about March of Dimes, the Kumpons formed a family team this year for the annual Walk for Babies and quickly became one of the top fundraising families for March of Dimes Delaware Chapter. “My husband is really gung-ho about it and wants to do it every year,” says Kumpon.

Son Samuel started out in this world at 2 pounds, 2 ounces and 12.5 inches long. He is now in excellent health and “really busy,” according to mom. He will be included in the 2010 Faces of Prematurity calendar, which features top fundraising family teams. It is available for purchase online at www.marchofdimes.com/delaware.

Having been touched by the family support program during her time in the NICU, Kumpon says, “Now I can’t hear of a premature birth and not think about the March of Dimes.”

The March of Dimes Delaware Chapter is grateful for the generosity of NICU Family Support Program sponsors, including: Bank of America, BlueCross/BlueShield of Delaware, Christiana Care Department of Pediatrics, Delaware Health Fund, The Engle Family Foundation, The Christmas Shop Foundation and Verizon. ■



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The Kennedys led the top March for Babies fundraising team in Delaware this year.



Walking the Walk

The famous annual fundraiser is also a celebration. by Susan Oates

"We walk in his honor," Jill Kennedy says of her triplet son Colin William, who died only eight days after his birth, and why she and her husband Bob walk in the annual March for Babies. Jill fits the profile of the typical walker in this annual March of Dimes fundraiser: 69 percent are female of child-bearing age (18-44), 47 percent are married, and 61 percent have attended or graduated from college. But Jill Kennedy is anything but typical.

This year, she and Bob led the top March for Babies fundraising team in Delaware, bringing in \$9,124 (and still counting) with a team of 44 family members and friends walking in Colin's honor. Last year was the Kennedys' first time participating in the event when they walked with more than 1,200 people in New Castle County (2,000 statewide) and helped to raise more than \$485,000 for March of Dimes Delaware Chapter.

The Kennedy team doubled to 40 strong in 2009 as the family spread the word. "People wanted to join in to help when they heard our story," she says.

During her pregnancy, Jill's water broke at 27 weeks and she spent the next five weeks on bed rest in the hospital. She had an older son Rees (then

age 3) at home at the time. But the babies wouldn't wait. On September 18, 2006, Jill delivered triplet boys Colin, Owen and Gavin nine weeks early. Colin fought hard for eight days before passing, and Owen and Gavin spent six weeks in the NICU at Christiana Care.

"I honestly didn't know about all of the work March of Dimes does until after my time in the NICU," says Jill. "It was almost 6-12 months after my boys were born that I realized how they helped us, indirectly, through research they funded."

"Every single person in the United States has been affected by March of Dimes in some way, through a niece, a nephew, a friend," Jill says. "They're like a guardian angel out there, touching people's lives. And not enough people know about what they do."

So she walks—to raise awareness, to honor Colin, and to celebrate the lives of Owen and Gavin.

March of Dimes Delaware Chapter has been hosting March for Babies for 35 years, always the third weekend in April. Mark your 2010 calendar for April 24 in Kent County, April 25 in New Castle County and May 15 in Sussex County. For more information, visit www.marchforbabies.com/delaware.

Exemplary Sponsor

Corporate leaders understand the importance of having strong teamwork within their organizations, and many seek opportunities to strengthen employee rapport while supporting a good cause through volunteerism.

Tony Young, president of Air Liquide, MEDAL in Newport, chooses to support March of Dimes and sponsors a corporate team for the March for Babies each year. "I do it for the company and my people," Young says. "Our employees enjoy being part of the fun of fundraising, and we, as a company, want to give something back to the community."

This year, the company raised more than \$59,000 for March of Dimes Delaware Chapter, making Air Liquide, MEDAL the state's top corporate fundraising team.

About 50 of 250 employees of Air Liquide, MEDAL participate in the March for Babies. Many more support internal fundraising efforts. They have held Olympics, Texas Hold 'Em and Wii Sports tournaments, as well as breakfast and lunch events. The company matches 50 cents on every dollar raised.

"We try to make it a fun event," Young says of the March for Babies. "We invite spouses and kids, and we have a hospitality tent with some food. It gives people a chance to bond after the walk and to meet new people. We try to keep it lighthearted because the reasons for being there are often quite hard."

Young encourages the participation of other companies in the hope that they will start their own fundraising efforts. He reached out to Peggy Davis DelFabbro, CEO of MDavis & Sons, Inc., about his company's fundraising efforts. DelFabbro made a generous donation and was joined by MDavis employees in the March for Babies.

"March of Dimes is definitely a worthwhile cause, and Tony is a customer of ours," says DelFabbro, "so we had a great day getting to know our customer better, helping a good cause, and having a great team-building experience."

To find out more about supporting March of Dimes Delaware Chapter by forming a corporate fundraising team visit www.marchforbabies.com. ■

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