



Newsletter
Summer 2015

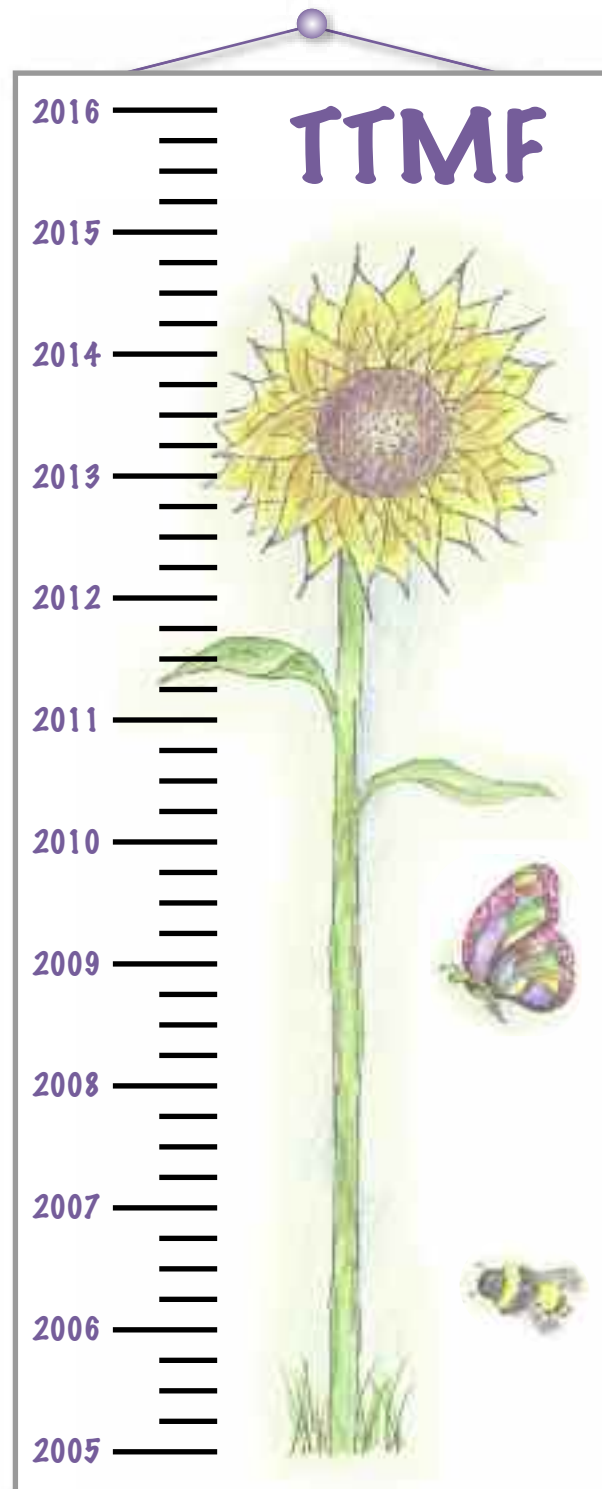
Look How Much We've Grown!

Back in 2005

- We were a small group of passionate and dedicated moms
- We worked hard from our homes, with very little funding
- We began a partnership in 1 hospital, Stamford
- We started parent-to-parent mentoring and opened our first Resource Room

Today in 2015

- We have a partnership with 4 local hospitals
- We run 7 well-developed bilingual programs: Mentoring, Resource Rooms, Website, Financial Assistance, Tiny Treasures, Bereavement and Blankets for Premies
- We are starting two new programs: Support Groups, both online and in-person, and the After The NICU directory
- We gratefully have the assistance of over 100 volunteers
- We have a 17-member Board of Directors and 3 staff people
- We provide programs to over 1000 families every year
- We give out more than 1000 "Welcome" and "Take Home" bags per year
- We provide direct financial support to more than 30 families per year
- We have raised over \$1.5 million to support our programs



A Letter from the Executive Director



THE BEST IS YET TO COME

This has been a momentous year for The Tiny Miracles Foundation. In celebrating a decade of service, we had the opportunity to look back. We have reflected on our early days in which two dynamic women, sitting around a kitchen table, recognized the need for emotional support and

education for parents of preemies. From this dream grew the reality of today. The accomplishments of TTMF have been many, touching the lives of more than 10,000 preemies and their families! One can only imagine how different their lives would have been without Tiny Miracles.

It would be natural for us to now take a deep breath and sit back to marvel at this growth. However, this is most certainly not the case for all those

associated with TTMF. As the rate of premature births continues to rise, as greater numbers of parents look to us during times of great vulnerability, and with the call for expansion and enrichment of services and programs, TTMF is rising to the challenge.

The years ahead will see an even more vibrant and dynamic Tiny Miracles. Already the Board is looking at new ways to better serve preemies and parents. Aware of the challenges presented by the future, we are now planning for the coming years. Over the coming years, TTMF will continue to grow and will remain committed to the very special needs of the preemies and parents we have the privilege to serve.

Since you are such an important part of the Tiny Miracles family, I invite you to share your thoughts and ideas. We want to hear from you and to learn how we can even better meet the many needs of our friends and supporters. We will never forget that you have been with us all along the way.

I look forward to celebrating the future with the Tiny Miracles family.

George Colabella
Executive Director

Since 2005...

The Tiny Miracles Foundation has touched the lives of more than 10,000 preemies and families, providing more than \$1.5 million in compassionate support.

- Thousands of hours of 1-on-1 volunteer parent mentoring at 4 area hospitals
- \$200,000 of bonding, developmental and baby equipment supplies
- Funded development and ongoing maintenance of 4 Resource Rooms, providing respite, educational materials, snacks, and toys for siblings
- The bilingual TTMF website provides support and education for thousands of families across the nation; social media reaches even more parents
- TTMF has provided over \$200,000 in direct financial support for economically distressed families covering such necessities as rent, child care, heat, utilities and transportation
- TTMF continues to serve as a model for similarly concerned organizations throughout the United States



Program Spotlight: Hospital Resource Rooms

Most expectant parents dream about the day their child is born and taking their newborn back to their familiar, cozy home. Unfortunately, parents of preemies' first experiences with their babies are in a hospital NICU. Although these NICUs save lives and the doctors and nurses are caring professionals, the NICUs are not "home," and they are definitely not familiar and cozy.

TTMF has four partner hospitals: Stamford, Norwalk, Danbury and Bridgeport. In 3 hospitals, we have funded a room near or within the NICUs. These spaces are set aside for the families with babies in the NICUs. They have furniture, televisions, computers with internet access, refreshments, coffee, toys for siblings, and parenting books. (When we expanded to Danbury Hospital, the Resource Room had already been constructed, but we provide all the materials and refreshments for the room).

These simple, cheerful rooms provide extraordinary benefits to our NICU families. It allows them to take a break from the stress of the NICU, while still remaining physically close to their babies. In the Resource Rooms, parents can check email or make a phone call, eat some lunch or take a nap, then return to visiting their babies.

It also provides a private space for parents to speak with doctors. While using the Resource Rooms, NICU parents often meet other parents and provide each other with emotional support. Many families tell us that these NICU friendships continue after their NICU journeys are over.

TTMF keeps each Resource Room stocked with parenting books that are available for the families to borrow or keep. The books cover specific topics like kangaroo care and breast feeding, as well as general titles such as The Premie Parents Companion and Newborn Intensive Care. There are also special children's books for siblings of preemies.

The Resource Rooms are one of Tiny Miracles most appreciated programs. The emotional boosts they provide are immeasurable and parents are so grateful for them! ❤️



Stamford Resource Room



Norwalk Resource Room



Bridgeport Resource Room



Danbury Resource Room

1 Mason and Eloise,
Born at 26 weeks

In their mother, Carrie's, own words...

In October 2012, my husband, Andrew, my 17 month old son (Joshua) and I moved from London UK to Stamford CT. At the time of our move I was 4 months pregnant with twins. Besides feeling huge and struggling to keep up with Josh, I was fine and having a completely healthy pregnancy.

One December morning I felt what I thought were Braxton Hicks contractions. However, they were real and the next thing I knew I was at Stamford hospital having a C-Section for Mason and Eloise at 26 weeks and 6 days gestation. Mason weighed 2lbs 2oz and Eloise 1lb 12oz. Unlike with Josh, I wasn't able to hold or even initially see my new babies...it was beyond awful. My husband counted about fifteen tubes and wires in and on my babies, which connected them to various apparatus and monitors surrounding their isolettes. For the first 24 hours they each had a nurse assigned to constantly watch for any life-threatening complications.

During the first two weeks they seemed to be progressing well. Then the two-week honeymoon was over and it all seemed to go wrong. Both Mason and Eloise required their second blood transfusion (they eventually would have 4 each) and both had to go back on ventilators. They were receiving a variety of medications including a diuretic to help drain fluid from their lungs. The nurses would also use a small plastic hammer on their chests to attempt to break up the fluid.

Mason was diagnosed with a Grade 2 IVH bleed in his brain and then it progressed to a Grade 3. About a week later, I arrived in the NICU only to find that Mason was having what appeared to be seizures. The neonatologist transferred him to Yale where they had pediatric neurosurgeons. After ten very long days at Yale the doctors were satisfied that he was no longer having seizures and Mason was transferred back to Stamford to be reunited with Eloise.

It was right in the midst of the downturn, on one of my lowest days, that I met a TTMF mentor in the NICU. The mentor had been in a similar situation about 14 years ago when she had 26 week twins and also an older daughter at home. It was the first time that I met somebody who knew what this all felt like. I suddenly didn't feel so alone and lost. The mentor showed me recent pictures and shared stories of how well her daughters were doing now. I thought that if they could get through this, then my twins could too!

Throughout Mason and Eloise's NICU stay I met different mentors from TTMF. These women had each been through what I was going through and they helped me to keep my spirits up and to keep positive.

Mason and Eloise finally started to make progress and steadily gain weight until finally they were ready to come home! They came home together and it was bliss!

Mason and Eloise are now nearly 2-1/2 years old and are both on the 50th percentile for length and weight for their non-adjusted age! They were on the "Birth to Three" program for a few months and Mason had a bit of PT, but their rapid development soon meant they didn't require extra help. We are so proud of them.

Having a child changes your whole perspective on life and having a preemie demonstrates strength beyond belief. ♥



Mason (left) and Eloise (right) in NICU



Mason and Eloise at 2-1/2 years old

2 Madelynn Jane,
Born at 27 weeks

In her mother, Billie's, own words...

Our story begins in 2012 when my wife, Kelly, and I found out that we were pregnant with twins. The pregnancy started off as a typical pregnancy; however, by 18 weeks I was hospitalized at Bridgeport Hospital due to a shortened cervix. Although the nurses and staff tried tirelessly to keep our sons cooking, our sweet handsome boys, Julian and Jacob, were born at 21 weeks gestation. They both lived for less than an hour and then gained their wings. They were surrounded by family and knew nothing but love during their short stay here on earth.

Fast forward approximately 1-1/2 years later and we found out that we were expecting again. At 13 weeks, I had a cerclage placed to keep my cervix closed. However, at 25 weeks my ultrasound showed that my cervix was funneled almost to the stitch. My doctor sent me to Bridgeport Hospital where I was admitted for monitoring. I remained there for a week and during that stay we had an opportunity to tour the NICU and meet some of the wonderful PAs, APRNs and Neonatologists. We were given a large book to read about what to expect when you have a preemie baby, called Newborn Intensive Care. We found out later that the book was a gift from The Tiny Miracles Foundation.

After a couple of difficult weeks of contractions, bleeding and bed rest, my water broke and we headed off again to Bridgeport Hospital. My labor progressed quickly. It was a very frightening process, but my family and the labor and delivery staff helped me through. From the time my water broke until our beautiful 2lb 2oz miracle, Madelynn Jane, was born, it was a whirlwind. We were not able to see Madelynn for a few hours after she was born; when we finally could, her small size and all the attached tubes and wires shocked us.

As the days passed, Madelynn did phenomenally well but there were a few bumps, such as high calcium levels, bilateral inguinal hernia surgery, and the typical preemie diagnoses and procedures. Despite all of that, her NICU stay was considered fairly smooth. All throughout our journey, we had the support of our family, friends, NICU staff, other NICU families and The Tiny Miracles Foundation. This helped us stay grounded and made things easier to bear. The friends that we made along the way are invaluable to us and will last a lifetime. After 58 long days, our sweet baby girl graduated from the NICU. She was 4lbs 11ozs the day that she came home.

Things have been going well since she came home and Madelynn is now almost 11 months old. She has her first two teeth, sits up on her own, is starting to crawl and makes sounds like dada, baba and mama. She is probably one of the happiest and friendliest babies that I have ever met! She has Birth To Three supports and is measuring beyond her corrected age.

Tiny Miracles provided us with some great resources and we attended the zoo event at the Beardsley Zoo where we were able to meet other miracles and their families. We look forward to staying involved with your organization. Keep up the great work because you really do make a difference in people's lives. ♥



Madelynn in NICU



Madelynn at 11 months

See more miracle stories on our website: www.ttmf.org



10th Anniversary Gala

It was an evening of grateful nostalgia and joyful celebration. Our 10th anniversary gala was held on April 24 at Wee Burn Country Club in Darien and included dinner, dancing and a live and silent auction. More than 300 guests were on hand to celebrate the work TTMF has done for the last 10 years and to thank some of our early champions. Our first ever Miracle Maker Awards were given to the people at each of our partner hospitals who supported our mission from the very

beginning and helped make the partnership possible: Dr. Robert Herzlinger of Bridgeport Hospital; Dr. Gerald Rakos and Kathy Livolsi, RNC, of Stamford Hospital; Mary Alice Cullen, RN, and Pamela Carola Dion of Danbury Hospital – WCHN; and Jeryl Topalian of Norwalk Hospital – WCHN. It was a wonderful night and TTMF raised more than \$250,000... a great start to our NEXT 10 years! ♥



Miracle Maker Award Honorees

Jan Mola, Miracle Maker award honoree Jeryl Topalian, Dr. Meltem Seli and Dr. Vicki Smetak all of WCHN-Norwalk Hospital.



Jennifer Tyrrell and spouse, Brendan Courtney of Westport, Juan Noriega and Shana Dee of New York, NY, and Curtis Hogue of Westport

NICU staff from Norwalk and Danbury Hospital



Event co-chairs PJ Marcella (New Canaan), Ashley Dineen (Darien), Michelle Hogue (Westport), Ariane Triay (Stamford) and Marisela Esposito (Weston)



Leanne LeFurge and Erin Jones of The March of Dimes



Mike Hooper and Jill Hooper of Fairfield with Julie Brown, RN and Connie Anderson, RN, Bridgeport Hospital



Dr. and Mrs. Shareef Jandali (left) and Dr. and Mrs. John Awad (right)

A Wild Family Event

Last September, we hosted our 2nd annual family friendly gathering, "A Wild Family Event" at The Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport, CT. Over 400 parents and children attended and the

event was an overwhelming success!! If you missed last year's festivities, join us THIS September for our 3rd annual Zoo event! See the back cover for details. ♥



DJ Bucko, (aka Adam Buckwald) and Dante Esposito

A young visitor enjoyed the face painting!



Lisa Choi, Marisela Esposito, (TTMF Board member), Margaret Krauss, Lori Barshop, and Dinah Cassidy



Jim, Pat, Christine and Peter Ostrowski



Olivia (left) and Ella (right) Sawala

Some young friends from Weston enjoyed themselves at the zoo!



Volunteer Spotlight: Pat Gallo and Vicky Pulido-Castellanos

The Tiny Miracles Foundation owes its success to the commitment and energy of our volunteers. In short, they are the lifeblood of TTMF. In this issue, we'd like to introduce Pat and Vicky...

Both Pat and Vicky spend considerable hours in our office, providing invaluable assistance in a wide range of activities: from administrative assistance, to organizing gift bags, to participating in our mailings, and whatever task is necessary for TTMF to succeed in its vast array of programs and services. We salute these two volunteers who give so graciously of their time and energy.

Pat Gallo

Pat first became involved with Tiny Miracles some 7 years ago when she participated in the Blankets for Premies program at her daughter's middle school. This led to other volunteer activities, including stuffing envelopes, putting together gift bags and helping with events. Although Pat is not a mother of a preemie, what she learned from other mothers touched her heart. About a year ago she responded to a request to help in the office. Although Pat is involved in other volunteer work, she could not say no.

Today Pat is a regular weekly feature at the office. Whatever the task she is quick to respond with a smile on her face. Her

empathy and enthusiasm cannot be measured. Pat is truly a part of the TTMF team. Her involvement is best summarized in her own words, "I like the feeling of helping to make someone else's life a little better." Pat goes on to say, "It was by chance that I got involved with Tiny Miracles, but it is by choice that I stay involved."

Pat, thank you for all you do. Your smile and your energy touch all of us. We are very fortunate to have you as part of the Tiny Miracles family!

Vicky Pulido-Castellanos

Vicky brings a special commitment to TTMF. Whether it is because she is a mother of a preemie or because of her unflagging wish to give back, Vicky adds a special sparkle to the office. Vicky first learned of Tiny Miracles when she heard about the need for volunteers for the Blankets for Premies program. Beyond her invaluable assistance in the office, her ability to relate to Latina moms is a particularly valuable asset. She tells us that comforting others and having the opportunity to make the difference in someone's life bring her great fulfillment. Vicky is so right when she says her goal is to "Give a smile."

Vicky, thank you for your sparkle and for the generous gift of your time, your energy, and your heart. ❤️



Pat Gallo



Vicky Pulido-Castellanos

Community Miracle Makers

All year long, there are wonderful people doing amazing things for TTMF. We include many of them in our email newsletters; here are three more:



St. Luke's Catholic Church's 1st grade Religious Education class assembled 10 baby blankets and attached homemade, signed cards. These blankets will be used in our Blankets for Premies program and will be given to families in the NICUs. Thank you to all the children in the class!



Terri Dusch, a Board member of TTMF, holds an annual tag sale and donates the proceeds to TTMF. This year her tag sale resulted in a \$2000 donation to our organization. Wow! Thank you Terri!



After attending our Beardsley Zoo event last September, Dani Spadacenta chose TTMF for her Bat Mitzvah community service project. She hung signs around her community and collected baby items for a week. The donated items, including all-new pacifiers, diapers, and clothing, will be given to families as part of our FAP program. Thank you, Dani!

LOOK AT ME NOW!

A big THANK YOU to Scott Sawala and his company, Two Home Runs, for donating the production of our new video, entitled "Look at me now!" The video debuted at our 10th Anniversary Gala last April. Scott filmed and produced the 5-minute video, which features preemies of many different ages. This beautiful and uplifting video can be viewed on our website, www.ttmf.org. Please check it out!

Board of Directors and TTMF Staff News

The BOARD OF DIRECTORS has had a very busy year!! After one year of guidance and leadership from our new Executive Director, George Colabella, we find ourselves finishing one of the most successful fundraising years in TTMF history. We also met record numbers of financial assistance needs and helped more families this year than prior years. We think we made a good decision when we hired George!!

Our major focus this year was to celebrate our 10-year anniversary with a major event and public relations campaign. We also asked George to lead us in a strategic planning session, and the roadmap to our future has been formally written. As we collaborate with more and more community organizations and hospitals, we recognize the need for a clear 5-year plan in the next few months. Our sub committees have given great strength to the management of the whole organization and our geographic footprint expands as we add Board Members from more locations throughout Fairfield County. New board members include Robin Black of Ridgefield, Leigh Elle D'Andrea and Christine Yang of New Canaan, and Karen Green of Bridgeport. Please read all about these talented women on our website at www.ttmf.org/board-member-biographies.

This May, we said a fond farewell to long time Board Member Ariane deBraux Triay, who stepped down after 8 years of service. Ariane filled many shoes in our organization over the years as a mentor, graphic designer and lead event fundraiser and committee chair. Her leadership role in all of our annual galas and smaller events led to the raising of over 1 million dollars for TTMF during her board service. We are so grateful for her unending devotion and incredible passion. The time and love she has given TTMF is immeasurable.



Robert Duffy finished his 3-year term on our board. We were lucky to have his service and time. Rob served in many advisory roles, and specifically on the strategic planning committee that planned our move forward on hiring our Executive Director. He was also crucial in many strategic decisions involving board structure and outreach. Rob and his wife Liz, have been involved in TTMF for 10 years. Liz had been a mentor at Norwalk and Bridgeport since our inception. We have been blessed by the love of the Duffy family for 10 years, and we know they are still close to our hearts!

Linda Queenan also served on our board for 3 years and finished her service this year. Among many accomplishments, Linda was a leader in helping with our expansion to Danbury Hospital, served as the lead mentor, and started our exposure in the Ridgefield area. Her resources in the entertainment industry and her many friends also helped add great spice to the many gala events we have had over the years!! We cannot thank Linda enough for her dedication and love for TTMF for many years.

As we move ahead into 2016, we will announce some important leadership changes in our Executive Board and management team that will help us bring us into the future. We have a very cohesive team, and happily this leads to great productivity among everyone on the board.

Leelee Klein, Board President

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Executive Director	George Colabella
Program Coordinator	Jennifer Johnson
Finance and Database Director	Kerry Wagner

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July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

\$20,000 and above

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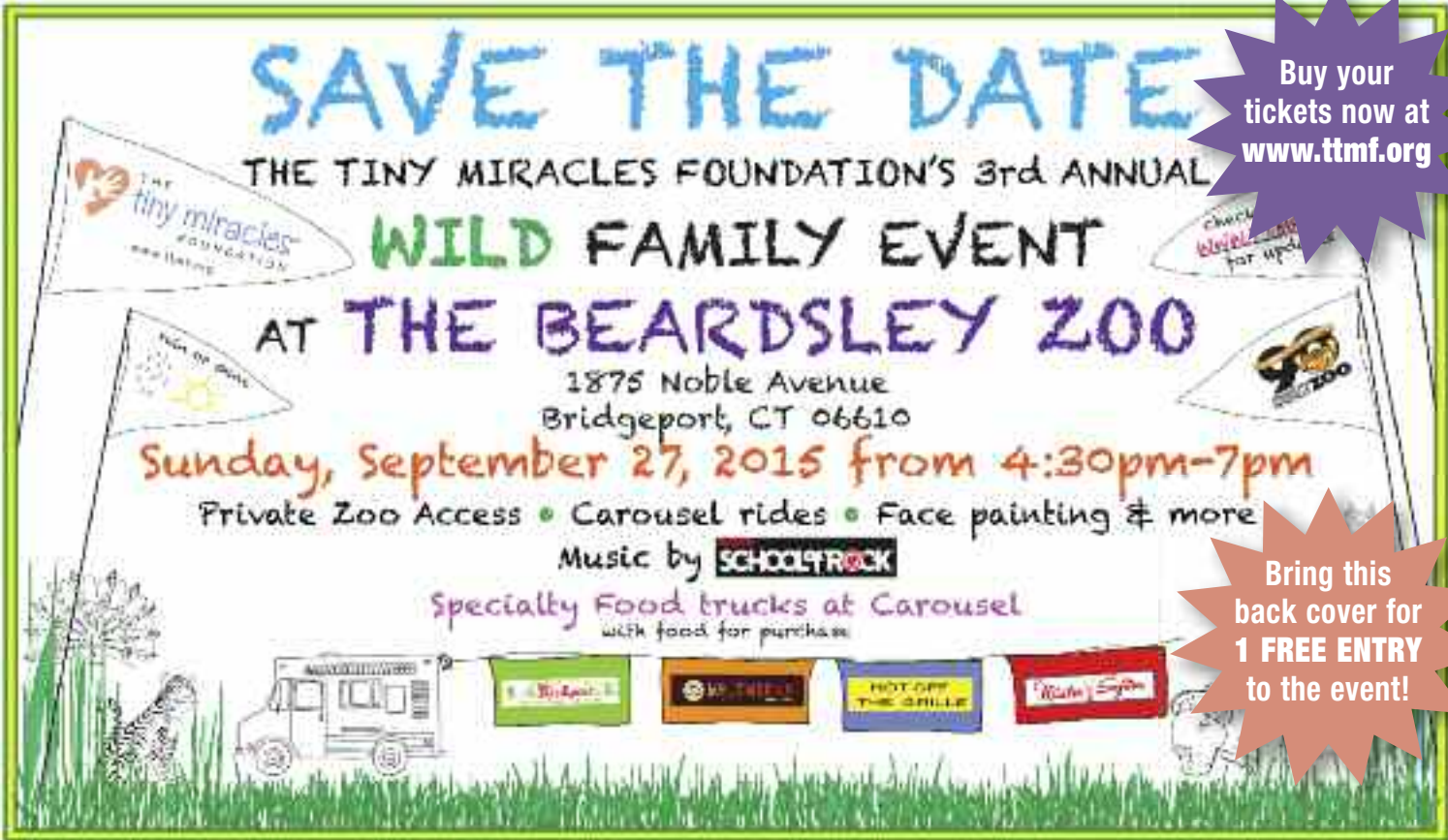
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