



THE  
tiny miracles®  
FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER | FALL 2016



grow with us!



# DIRECTOR'S LETTER

As we move into our second decade of services and programs for premature babies and their families, TTMF is poised for growth. We are seeing an increase in the number of premature births and with this a growing need for our unique and compassionate support. Touching the lives of more than 1,200 premature babies and families each year, we have learned that we are making a profound difference in the lives of the most vulnerable in our community.

With a firm commitment to those who need us most, we are now expanding and enriching all that we do. There is no doubt that TTMF will be there for these very special infants and families. Looking to the future, the Board of Directors has reaffirmed its mission, and with a long-range plan developed we are moving forward. Based upon experience and feedback

from those we serve and from our community partners, there are now a number of exciting actions being put into place. TTMF has added a part-time Director of Family Services to its staff. This professional will thus extend our

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“As long as there are preemies and parents who need our support, programs, and assistance The Tiny Miracles Foundation will be there to offer a hand and hope.”

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services to parents and preemies. In our tradition of responding to the needs and concerns of parents, this addition further advances our mission. TTMF is frequently approached by other hospitals, parents, and community organizations throughout the region. To date there have been many occa-

sions in which TTMF has responded. With a view towards formalizing and enriching our current programs and services, TTMF is reviewing the logistics of adding an additional hospital to our network. We are also looking at ways to add to our already extensive continuum of services. The Tiny Miracles Foundation is not about to rest on a decade of accomplishments. Rather, TTMF will grow. As long as there are preemies and parents who need our support, programs, and assistance The Tiny Miracles Foundation will be there to offer a hand and hope.



George Colabella  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWS

The success of The Tiny Miracles Foundation is the direct result of the time, energy, and commitment of our dynamic Board of Directors. TTMF is fortunate to have a diverse Board which includes men and women with many varied skills, professions, and expertise. What they all have in common is their dedication to the TTMF mission. As parents of preemies they bring with them a unique understanding of the needs of preemies and families plus a view to ensuring the excellence of our programs, services, and assistance to the most vulnerable members of the community. We salute them all and say thank you for their service.

We are very blessed by a Board of Directors who show unwavering volunteerism and dedication for all future families of premature babies in our community.

Board Members Teresa Dusch and Rich Goldman recently stepped down this year. Terri served on our board for 3 years, and was a leader from the beginning. Terri began helping TTMF by leading the first “After the NICU” program, creating a category of specialists. Terri coordinated the Tiny Treasures Program in 2012, and led the way to the packing of 1600 bags that year! More recently, Terri served as our Board Secretary and was heavily involved in strategic planning and the

recruitment of our current Executive Director and Program Manager. Terri also helped bring awareness and support for TTMF in the Westport community. We are grateful for her time and accomplishments.

Rich Goldman was our first male board member. Happily, we added a few males in the past few years. He began on our board in 2007, and was the leader of our strategic planning each year. Rich’s vision, strength, and

BOARD PRESIDENT LEELEE KLEIN WAS RECOGNIZED WITH THE *WOMAN OF DISTINCTION AWARD* BY DARIEN/NORWALK YWCA, FOR HER OUTSTANDING EFFORTS HELPING HUNDREDS OF FAMILIES IN LOWER FAIRFIELD COUNTY WELCOME PREMATURE BABIES INTO THEIR LIVES



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEWS, CON'T

tenacity helped us push forward to each stage of our growth, and was a key advisor to me and Gwen. Rich pushed us to believe in the ability to be who we are today. We are forever indebted to Rich for his huge impact on the future of all families of premature babies in our community. We cannot forget Jami, Rich's wife, who also dedicated many years to our programs. We have been blessed by the Goldman family.

Executive Board changes and elections include our new Vice President Christine Yang who is taking over for Patty Cunningham. Robin Black was elected as our new Corporate Secretary.

The biggest announcement this year is from me! I have been asking the Board for many years to look for a new leader. TTMF has grown to be a very strong and significant organization. It is important to keep things

new and fresh, which means new leadership. I have been the President for 7 years, and it is time to open doors for new leadership and vision. I am happy to say the wonderful and dedicated Marisela "Sela" Esposito has been elected as the next President, and will take on her new role in January 2017. She has been working side by side with me all year. She will fuel the TTMF family for the coming years. I plan to remain on the Board and will remain as the Program Committee Chair.

We also plan to add new Board members in January, and we will make those announcements in the New Year!



Leelee Klein  
PRESIDENT



### BOARD

- PRESIDENT** Elizabeth (Leelee) Klein
- PRESIDENT ELECT** Marisela Esposito
- VICE PRESIDENT** Christine Yang
- SECRETARY** Robin Black
- TREASURER** Ashley Dineen
- CO FOUNDER** Gwendoyne Noto
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### STAFF

- PROGRAM COORDINATOR** Jennifer Johnson
- FAMILY SERVICES DIRECTOR** Elisabeth Schneider
- FINANCE DIRECTOR** Kerry Wagner
- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** George Colabella

## STAMFORD FAMILY RESOURCE ROOM

This past year the Stamford Resource Room was given a complete facelift. Spearheaded by TTMF Lead Mentor, Peggy Sawala, and Angela Lowy of Grace HomeStyleDesign, the Stamford Resource Room is now a warm and inviting sanctuary for families. These two dynamic ladies committed themselves to transforming a waiting room area into a safe, warm, welcoming Family Room.

The Stamford Resource Room is a



Peggy Sawala  
and Angela Lowy

place where moms, dads, and families can go and find respite and tranquility away from the glare of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Here they can put up their feet, have a snack, watch tv, search the internet, or just close their eyes for a few valuable minutes. Not only did Peggy and Angela turn a dream into a reality, they secured numerous donors to ensure that this would be a true and lasting Family Room.

*"Thank you for all of the emails, phone calls, and visits we received while in the hospital. While we never thought we'd ever have a preemie, we feel fortunate to have met an organization like Tiny Miracles."*

KAREN AND RYAN (BRIDGEPORT)

*"I just wanted to thank Tiny Miracles during my triplets stay at Bridgeport Hospital. Everyone was wonderful Things like the fleece blankets are keepsakes I will cherish forever."* CHRISTINE (BRIDGEPORT)





# MIRACLE STORY

BURKE FAMILY

In the spring of 2015 my husband Liam and I were thrilled and nervous to be expecting twin boys due at the end of the summer. My pregnancy was going extremely well, I was active and feeling good. Then our appointment for the anatomy ultrasound at 20 weeks changed everything. The expression on our doctor's face changed to one of immediate concern and they informed us that I was showing signs of preterm labor. My cervix length was alarmingly short. Thankfully, we were told the boys were healthy and growing appropriately. Our doctor instructed me to stop working and put me on bed rest immediately. I was prescribed medication that would hopefully slow the onset of preterm labor. I'll never forget, shortly after being put on bed rest, when one of my OBs said, "we're all very worried about you making it to viability". Having to stop teaching was depressing and isolating and, of course, I blamed myself.

Next were weekly visits with our doctors at Bridgeport Hospital. Some weeks I appeared stable, and other weeks showed more contractions and more cervical shortening. During my 26th week of pregnancy I had a false alarm and thought my membranes had ruptured. We rushed to the hospital but, thankfully, they had not. I was sent home a day later, but I kept my bags packed. Starting to prepare myself for the potential of having premies, I began to research as much as I could. I came

across Tiny Miracles online and within 30 mins I was sharing my story with the incredible Leelee Klein. She was an invaluable resource and support to me and my husband over the next 7 weeks.

On the morning of June 16th I was bleeding and in a lot of pain. I knew we needed to get to the hospital quickly. Shepard Whitwell & Griffin Scott arrived at 27 weeks.

My emergency C-section happened so fast that my husband wasn't able to make it into the OR. Shep and Griff were so tiny and vulnerable. Griff weighed only 1 lb., 15 oz., and Shep weighed only 2 lbs., 3 oz. The doctors

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"Throughout it all we were so grateful to Tiny Miracles and Leelee for the constant support, during the whole process."

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immediately whisked them away to the NICU, where they would stay for the next three months.

Our time spent at the NICU was like nothing we had ever experienced. It was so emotional and full of ups and downs. Griff, with the lower birthweight, had a more difficult time right from the start. He was placed on a ventilator, required frequent blood transfusions, overcame a terrifying bout with necrotizing enterocolitis, and suffered a grade 3 brain bleed. Shep was more fortunate but still faced respiratory challenges, transfusions and scares with infections. Both boys experienced respiratory strug-



Griffin and Shepard today

gles. Shep came home after 85 days in the NICU but remained on oxygen and a heart rate monitor at home for 3 weeks. After 99 days Griff came home requiring oxygen and a heart rate monitor through Christmas. Throughout it all we were so grateful to Tiny Miracles and Leelee for the constant support, during the whole process, we don't know what we would have done without them!

Having just celebrated the boys' 1st birthday, we are forever grateful that they are healthy, happy and making immeasurable strides every day.

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*"We are truly grateful for all the things that you helped us with, and most important for helping us when we were at the hardest and saddest times of our lives. When we had nobody to turn to we thank the lord every day for such a wonderful and beautiful organization and people who helped us in this great time of need."* CRYSTAL (BRIDGEPORT)



Shepard and Griffin, born at 27 weeks



# MIRACLE STORY

CHRISTIAN FAMILY

My pregnancy was overcast with the worst morning sickness, but my fiancée and I were excited nonetheless. We were both happy to the point of tears at our ultrasound when it was revealed that we were going to welcome a little princess. We already had 4 rambunctious boys at home. But soon after our exciting reveal, we began to notice that this ultrasound was taking way longer and the technician seemed very concerned. The room became quite as she left the room to consult with the doctor. That was the longest five minutes of my life. Upon return, the doctor informed me that I would be placed on bedrest due to a shortened and thinning cervix. I didn't understand. What? How? Why? This had never happened before. I returned in a week only to be admitted immediately following my ultrasound. I was on bedrest and only allowed to get up for necessities. Then, to make matter worse, I became ill with a stomach bug that had dehydrated me.

I had been on bedrest for about a month when my water broke. I wanted to panic, but all I could do was stand there frozen with fear. The nurses directed me to the bed and called the doctor. I was moved to labor and delivery and placed on full bedrest. I lay in bed praying and worrying for three more weeks. As the weeks went by, my fluid levels fluctuated. I had

no clue that the human body was so amazing and that God would hold my princess in as long as she needed.

I had never been so afraid of anything in my life. My tiny miracle made it to 26 weeks and 6 days gestation. At just a few hours shy of 27 weeks, I delivered by c-section. My tiny miracle had arrived at 2.1 lbs. She was small, but the doctors were pleasantly surprised that she was eyes open and crying. My fiancée and I were only able to get a brief view of our wide eyed lil' fighter. For the next 80 days I lived between home and the NICU trying very hard to balance my 4 boys at home and our tiny miracle in the NICU. I was visited by a Tiny Miracles volunteer mentor during my postpartum stay. She showed me encouraging pictures of her twin daughters who also had been preemies. They are now beautiful teenage girls. I took comfort in hearing another parent's experience. She also warned me there would be days that seemed as if my daughter was taking steps backward in health. She warned me of the emotional roller coaster that awaited me. All of these warnings and encouragement came in handy. I had many days of anxiety and joy, and days of feeling helpless. But those mentor words of wisdom carried me



Gianni, at left, born at 26 weeks, and above with her brothers

through. The staff at the NICU and the generosity of The Tiny Miracles Foundation and its volunteers pulled and pushed our family through the roller coaster of being a NICU parent. We were emotionally and financially stressed. The Tiny Miracles Foundation coupled with NICU staff were a key part in helping our family survive our experience. In the end, we all have the blessing of being a part of the survival of God's gift. Our tiny miracle is Gianni aka Miracle.

## NOTABLE PREEMIES

MARK TWAIN

KATIE HOLMES

*Michael J. Fox*

*Albert Einstein*

STEVIE WONDER







# ANNUAL GALA

On May 6, 2016 several hundred friends, families, and supporters came together at **The Inn at Longshore in Westport**. It was a fun-filled evening celebrating the many accomplishments of The Tiny Miracles Foundation as it enters its second decade of service, support, and assistance to premature babies and their families. Our Events Co-Chairs, **Marisela Esposito and PJ Marcella**, along with Gala Co-Chairs Carrie Cromwell-Hunt and Valerie Saltzman, and their dynamic Gala Committee, produced a wonderful evening. The night featured a special address by **Jane Geddes** (former PGA Champion) and mother of preemies. It was a great night of celebration and recognition, paving the way for our next 10 years of assisting the most vulnerable babies and families in our community.



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**1** BACK ROW: PJ Marcella, Leelee Klein, Marisela Esposito, Elisabeth Schneider, Dr. Karen Sutton; FRONT ROW: Val Saltzman, Carrie Cromwell-Hunt **2** Debbie Prister & Bernie Park **3** Dr. and Mrs. John Ciannella **4** Kathy Streinger, Michael Klein, Jen and Steven Lau **5** Jaclyn & Michael Carbino, Jennifer & Kevin Anderson **6** Brooke & Jason Gies, Rebecca & Tim Brown



## A WILD FAMILY EVENT

On September 27, 2015 hundreds of children and parents attended the **Wild Family Event** at **The Beardsley Zoo** in Bridgeport. Children's entertainment, games, music, and fun were enjoyed by all. Set under a bright autumn sky, this 3<sup>rd</sup> zoo event again proved to be an overwhelming success. **Join us on September 18 for another day of fun at the zoo!**



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- 1 the Degl family
- 2 the Sawala family
- 3 Children enjoying the event
- 4 the Broder family



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## NATIONAL PREMATUREITY DAY

On November 17, 2015 TTMF celebrated **National Prematurity Day** with a special exhibit **Art Ahead of Its Time**. Held at the **Westport Art Center**, the event featured art work created by preemies. Included were footprints and handprints by preemies currently in the NICU to preemies now young adults. The evening drew numerous guests and was a great success. Look for future announcements as to this year's celebration.



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1 Felixmar Pastran, Susan Chudwick, Eli Silva 2 Julia Broder 3 Michelle & Cal Hogue

### IN JUST ONE YEAR

TTMF DISTRIBUTED **445**  
BLANKETS TO PREMIES  
AND FAMILIES

# 62

PAYMENTS MADE  
BY TTMF FOR RENT,  
UTILITIES, HEAT, AND  
OTHER EMERGENCIES

# 508

MENTOR VISITS TO  
PROVIDE EMOTIONAL  
SUPPORT TO  
PARENTS

TTMF DELIVERED **326**  
HOME CARE BAGS WITH DIAPERS  
AND PREMIE CLOTHING

TTMF DISTRIBUTED **372**  
WELCOME BAGS WITH  
BONDING DOLLS

# 43

FAMILIES TTMF  
PROVIDED  
FINANCIAL  
ASSISTANCE





# A TIME OF GROWTH

## DANBURY NEWS TIMES

The Tiny Miracles Foundation has been recognized for its extensive services and support provided to preemies and parents at Danbury Hospital. The December 27th Front Page story *Mentors Help Parents of Premies* provided a touching look at our mentor program. Danbury mentor, Robin Black spent several hours with Mackenzie Rigg, reporter for the Times. Robin provided a tour of the NICU, introduced her to the medical staff, and spent considerable time telling her personal story. Released as the lead in their Christmas issue, the article told the story of the Williams family and their twin sons Holden and Barrett. It told of their journey through the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and the support and hope provided by Robin. TTMF remains committed to the provision of care, support, programs, and assistance to preemies and families in Danbury Hospital, as well as our other partners, Stamford, Norwalk, and Bridgeport Hospitals.



## WABC-TV

On Mother's Day (May 8<sup>th</sup>), TTMF Board Member Karen Green appeared on the WABC-TV show *Here And Now*. Karen shared with host Sandra Bookman the many activities of TTMF and our on-going commitment to premature babies and parents. Touching the lives of 1,200 preemies and families each year, the public learned that through TTMF there is not only assistance but hope. Broadcast into millions of homes throughout Connecticut, New York City, Westchester, Rockland, Long Island, and New Jersey, the message of TTMF's caring programs, services, and assistance reached an unprecedented audience. To view the full interview visit us at [ttmf.org](http://ttmf.org) and click on "About Us" and click on "Press Releases" at our "Newsroom." Great job Karen!



Karen Green and Marisela Esposito

## DIRECTOR OF FAMILY SERVICES

As TTMF continues to expand and enrich its services, programs, and assistance for premature babies and their families, we have added the position of Director of Family Services. Elisabeth Schneider, LMFT (licensed marriage and family therapist) joined TTMF in August. Her extensive experience and expertise extends TTMF's support of preemies and families. Elisabeth has led mentor training for TTMF and is a welcome addition to our family.



*"Just wanted you to know that I received the beautiful package from your foundation, THANK YOU SO MUCH! Tiny Miracles is such an amazing foundation, I can't thank you all enough, and I will never forget all the help you provided for me and my family!"*

SARAH (DANBURY)

*"Thank you so much for all the sweet and thoughtful gifts for my little baby boy in the NICU at Norwalk Hospital. It made me smile and feel better knowing how many other moms have had preemies and they grow to be big and strong and so wonderful."*

BRITTANY (NORWALK)





# MIRACLE MAKERS

IN THE COMMUNITY

There are many believers in The Tiny Miracles Foundation who each year devote their time, energy, and commitment to us. .

Once again, *The Princess Ball* brought together hundreds of 1st through 8th grade girls and their fathers/grandfathers. They danced the night away in support of TTMF. Their donation to TTMF is greatly appreciated

The *Middlesex Middle School* once again made 500 blankets for preemies during their 2 day Blank-A-Thon. Thank you for your continued kindness. Special thanks go to Kelly DePiano who has led this effort for the past 10 years.

The *Fairfield County Bar Foundation*, designated TTMF as the recipient of their golf outing, which was held at the Sterling Farms Golf Club. Their gift will go a long way in helping us provide needed services and support to preemies and families.

A very special thank you goes to Janine Testa who organized the *Music for Angels* event, benefitting TTMF. An entertaining event at O'Neill's Restaurant, this family day was enjoyed by many.

Thank you to *Tina Dragone* who held a special opening and night of shopping with support going to TTMF.

Thanks to the *New Canaan Newcomers* who organized a Holiday House Tour fund raiser which included TTMF.

Thank you to *St. Catherine's Center for Special Needs, Darien High School Community Council, Temple Sinai of Stamford, Samantha Richer, and numerous Girl Scout troops* who made premie blankets for TTMF.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped TTMF pack 1,000 Tiny Treasures Hospital Supply Bags. Their energy and commitment will brighten the lives of the preemies and families whom we have the privilege to serve.



1 Stamford Temple Sinai families 2 Former preemies help to pack Tiny Treasures 3 Music for Angels' Janine Testa with her children 4 Middlesex Middle School's Kelly DePiano with her children 5 Jane Geddes (former LPGA champion), Marisela Esposito (TTMF President Elect), Eric Broder, Esq. (TTMF Board Member), Deborah Cannavino, Esq. (President Fairfield County Bar Foundation), and Lauren J. Mashe, Esq. (Director Fairfield County Bar Foundation)



Christine Yang, left, with New Canaan Community Foundation's Lindsey Heron

BOARD MEMBER, **CHRISTINE YANG**, WAS PUBLICLY HONORED BY THE **NEW CANAAN COMMUNITY FOUNDATION**. IN NOVEMBER, 2015, CHRISTINE WAS RECOGNIZED IN THE CATEGORY BOARD LEADERSHIP — ROOKIE OF THE YEAR. IN HER FIRST YEAR OF THE BOARD, CHRISTINE HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TINY MIRACLES FOUNDATION. AS CHAIR OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE, SHE SPREAD THE GOOD WORKS OF TTMF INTO NUMEROUS COMMUNITIES THROUGH HER MEDIA RELEASES AND ONGOING COMMUNICATION!



*"It's such an exceptional thing you've done for us, and we couldn't be more grateful or appreciative."* NICOLE (YALE)



# MIRACLE

## DONORS

July 1, 2015 - June 30, 2016

### \$20,000 AND ABOVE

The Estate Of Richard Cummings  
Michael and Leelee Klein  
The Leir Charitable Foundations  
Stephen & Mary Birch Foundation

### \$10,000 TO \$19,999

The Bauer Foundation  
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Middlesex Middle School  
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PJ Marcella  
The Princess Ball  
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Westport Young Womans League  
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The Young Women's League Of New Canaan

### \$500 TO \$999

Aiello Charitable Foundation  
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Minhee Choi and Roldao Carvalho  
Brendan and Jennifer Courtney

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Richard and Amy Schafraun  
Christina Scherwin  
Jeff and Marie Smith  
Robert Smolens  
John and Charlotte Suhler  
Thiemann-Wicker Family Foundation  
James and Jennifer Vellano  
Sean and Kerry Wagner

### \$100 TO \$249

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The Bi-Cultural Day School  
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John and Sue Bliss  
Michael and Julie Blitzler  
Jennifer Bragg  
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Antonio and Jennifer Mielec  
Moms Club Of Newtown  
Tom and Susan Moore  
Chris and Kathie Moran  
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William and Janet Zaccarelli  
Jim and Jenny Zech

### \$1 TO \$99

Although space does not allow us to publicly acknowledge donors of under \$100, we are grateful for every donor who believes in The Tiny Miracles Foundation. Your gift-of any amount-makes a difference.

### IN HONOR OF

The Bridova Family  
Jude Thomas Cavagnuolo  
Lyla Cerabino  
Jack Chioffi  
The Church family  
Ava Marie Duscio  
Dante Mario Esposito  
Thomas Godina and family  
Jami and Richard Goldman  
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