



THE  
tiny miracles®  
FOUNDATION

Newsletter  
Summer 2014

*As we kick off our 10th year of supporting families with premature babies...*



*...We want to thank you for being a part of the Tiny Miracles family!*

## A Letter from the Executive Director



Dear TTMF Friends and Supporters,

A decade of service to preemies and their parents! To think that only 10 years ago parents, during times of great vulnerability, were left to fend for themselves; left alone during the major crises in their lives without answers and without anyone to turn to.

These had to be harrowing times. Amidst this bleakness a spark was kindled. Our founders recognized the need for personal and emotional support for parents. Having experienced the same fear, stress, and confusion, they started what was to become The Tiny Miracles Foundation.

As we look to celebrate our 10th anniversary it is only natural to reflect upon all that has transpired during the last 10 years. Although we can come up with estimates, it is difficult to calculate how many

hundreds, if not thousands, of preemies and their families have been touched by TTMF. Today our services are well known, and for the parents and preemies whom we have the privilege to serve, we have become a welcoming beacon of hope. This is certainly no small accomplishment!

This is also a time to look to the future. Although proud of all we have achieved, we recognize that the need continues to grow. We are aware of the challenges before us and have renewed our commitment to the most fragile members of our expanded community. Looking to expand and enrich our services and programs, we look forward to the next decade with a renewed sense of hope, energy, and caring.

A 10th anniversary gift is said to be a gift of jewelry. We have already received that gift, for all of you that have supported us and have been our friends, you are the precious stones that sparkle and inspire us. Thank you for making these first ten years possible.

George Colabella  
Executive Director

## Two Miracle Stories

### 1 **Kimberly Sophia,** *Born at 30 weeks*

Ortilia Carolina had wanted a child for a long time. When she found out she was pregnant, she was so grateful and excited.

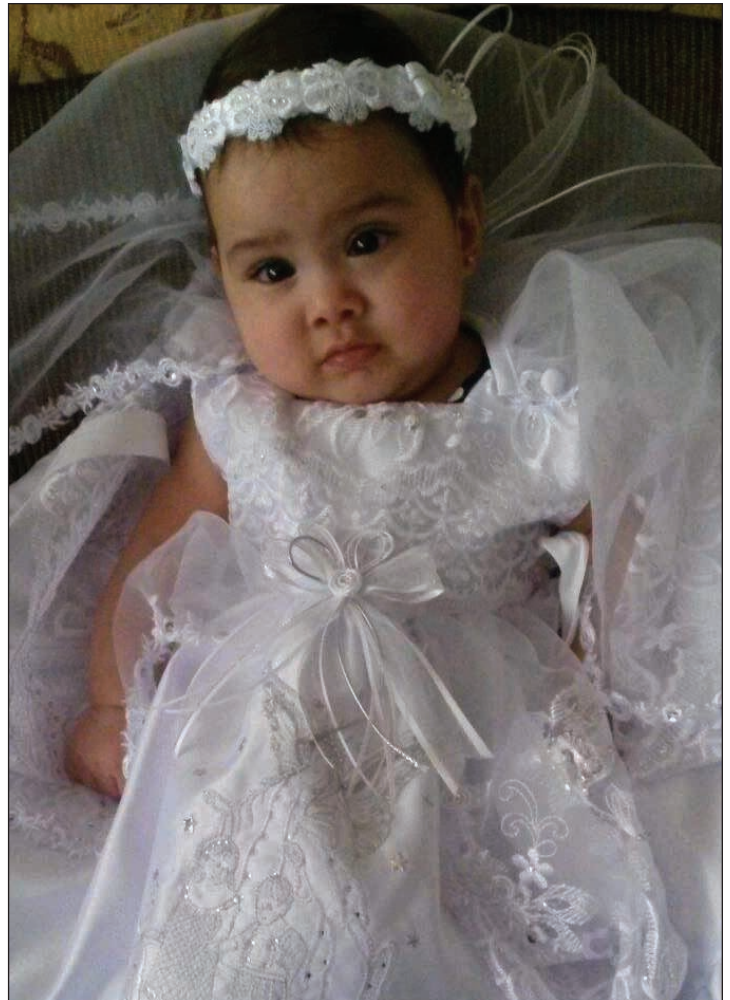
Her pregnancy progressed uneventfully when suddenly, with no warning, she started having contractions. She was only 7 months pregnant. After Ortilia was in the hospital for three days, Kimberly Sophia was born. She was 30 weeks and weighed 2 pounds, 15 ounces.

Ortilia reflected on getting released from the hospital and going home to her apartment without her baby girl. She says, "I felt so bad. The house was all ready, but no baby." She went to see Kimberly in the NICU every day from 8:00am to 2:00pm and then again from 7:00 to 9:00pm. Her doctor tried to tell her to take it easy, since she was still recovering from a c-section. "But I said this is my baby. I have to see her."

Ortilia also felt a lot of guilt; she had never seen a premature baby before and thought it was her fault the baby was born so early. Then she met several Tiny Miracles parent mentors. "They told me their stories and helped explain things to me."

When Kimberly was released from the hospital after 45 days, Ortilia received clothing and diapers as a gift from TTMF.

Kimberly is now a beautiful 10-month-old, and is getting stronger every day! ♥



**2** Victoria Maignan,  
Born at 30 weeks

In 2012, Rolanda Domercant was pregnant and excited to become a mom for the first time. She had lost her first pregnancy, so this one was especially meaningful. However, it was a difficult, high-risk pregnancy, and she battled high blood pressure and depression.

On December 19th, when Rolanda was 30 weeks pregnant, her water broke and baby Victoria was born at Stamford Hospital weighing just 1 pound, 6 ounces.

Rolanda remembers, “In the NICU, it was scary. Very scary. I had to have faith. I just kept telling myself she would make it.”

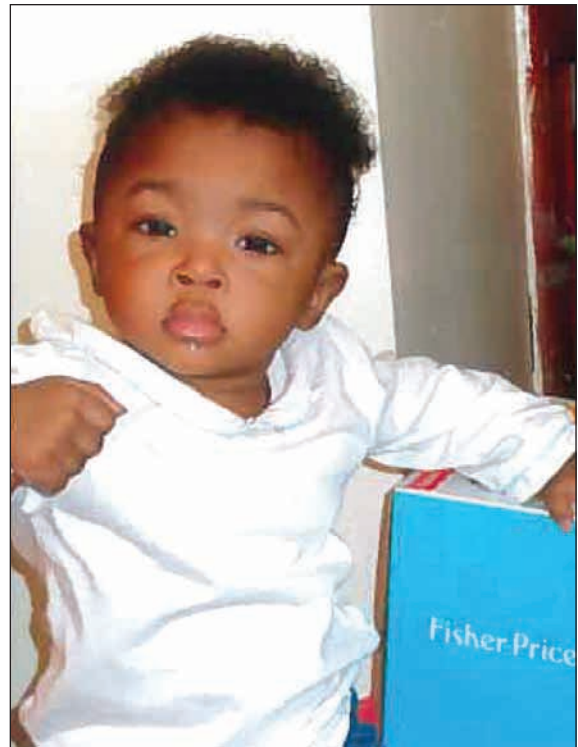
Tiny Miracles played a big role for Rolanda. “They talked to me. They gave me a lot of hope. The doctors told me she would be okay, but it’s different when a mom says it — somebody who has been through the same thing.”

Rolanda also used Tiny Miracle’s Financial Assistance Program (FAP) to help her get through the financial strain of having a baby in the NICU. “Tiny Miracles helped me with rent, transportation, and baby clothes. They helped a lot — a lot”.

Victoria is now 20 months old. She battles ear infections and may need speech therapy, but she’s walking and getting stronger every day. Rolanda says happily, “It’s going to take time, but she’s going to make it.” ♥



Victoria in NICU



Victoria at 20 months old

If you love reading our miracle stories and want to read more,  
go to our website: [www.ttmf.org](http://www.ttmf.org)



## Program Spotlight: Parent Mentoring and Support

The birth of a premature baby is often a frightening and isolating time for parents. They can feel helpless as they see their infant enclosed in an isolette, connected to tubes and wires. They are unable to hold their newborn and have countless questions. Frequently it is their first experience with premature babies and, sitting in the NICU, they may feel very alone.

This is where our TTMF Parent Mentoring Program comes in. Our volunteer mentors are all parents of preemies who have lived with the emotional rollercoaster and vulnerability of being a parent of a child in the NICU. These compassionate, specially-trained mentors visit the Bridgeport, Danbury, Stamford and Norwalk NICUs every week to connect with parents.

While every mentoring experience is different, on any given visit our mentors might: listen to the concerns and fears of each parent; share some of their own

personal experiences; help to explain what goes on in the NICU and some of the things they might expect; talk about the joy, and challenges, they might face when they get to bring their baby home; or just sit quietly and keep someone company. The focus is upon providing comfort and sharing a sense of hope with new preemie parents in a way that only parents who have been in that situation can provide. (Our mentors do not offer medical advice, suggest treatment options, or make referrals to physicians or specialists.)

The ability to share experiences and to provide empathy and understanding is invaluable to new preemie parents, and each year the number of parents seeking our mentors grows. In response to this need, we are expanding our TTMF mentor program and are planning more extensive training sessions over the coming year. ♥

## Mentor Spotlight: Karen Green



Karen Green started mentoring for Tiny Miracles over a year ago. What made her start? Twelve years ago, her daughter was born at 26 weeks. Tiny Miracles didn't exist yet and Karen remembers wishing she had some support. As a trained baby nurse, Karen had plenty of knowledge about infants, but she says, "It would have been nice to talk to someone about my personal situation."

Karen loves being a mentor and giving back to the preemie community. She enjoys meeting people from different backgrounds and finds satisfaction in helping someone go from being a scared parent of a preemie to becoming a confident parent of a baby.

"There are many people to focus on the babies, especially the problems or issues of the babies, but as mentors we're there to focus on the parents. How can we help you become a more comfortable and confident parent?" ♥

## Help a Preemie – Donate Your Car!



(Or your truck, boat, camper or motorcycle.)  
Proceeds of the sale of your used vehicle will be donated to TTMF.

**Call 888-837-7031**

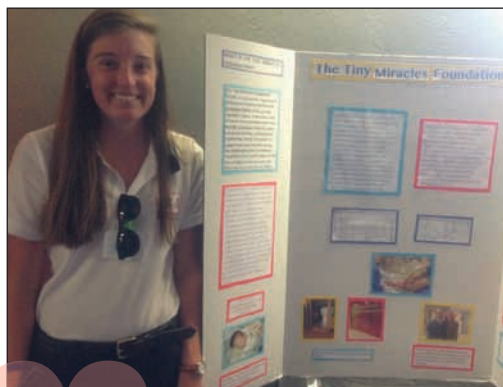


## Community Miracle Makers

*All year long, there are wonderful people doing amazing things for TTMF. Here is a quick snapshot of some of them:*



With a \$1,000 grant from the b-Cause Foundation, **Adalie Hogue** of Westport created 1,500 "Miracles" rings. The rings, which bear our TTMF logo and glow in the dark, are being sold at Wishlist in Westport for \$3 each. 100% of the proceeds go to TTMF in honor of her brother, who was born prematurely. She has raised over \$2,500 so far! You are amazing, Adalie – thank you!



**Emma Byrne**, (a 32 week preemie!) was our high school intern for five weeks last year and she worked diligently on our "After the NICU" Directory. She also made her experience with TTMF the focus of her Darien High School senior project. Thank you for all your hard work, Emma!



**Leigh D'Andrea**, a preemie parent and TTMF volunteer, organized an IMPACT day event with her firm Deloitte in coastal Fairfield County. They held a clothing and diaper drive to benefit the low-income families who have premature babies in our community. The items that were collected will be used by the TTMF Financial Assistance Program, (FAP). The wonderful employees at Deloitte also donated money to our FAP Program. Thank you to Leigh and everyone at Deloitte!



**Claire Borecki**, a Darien High School freshman, organized a "Blanket-A-Thon" for our Blankets for Premies program. Claire's Girl Scout troop, Troop 50535, spent many hours over several months preparing the fleece. The day of the Blanket-A-Thon, there were approximately 35 elementary school Girl Scouts from several different troops who participated in the event. After several hours of hard work, the girls had assembled 40 blankets. Thank you, Claire, and all the Girl Scouts who participated!



**Natalia Kotowska**, 13 years old, made 75 beautiful flannel receiving blankets for her church's Confirmation Class community service project, using fleece donated by a family friend, Alice Clark. Wow! The receiving blankets will be given as gifts to the parents of premies in our four partner hospitals. Great job, Natalia!



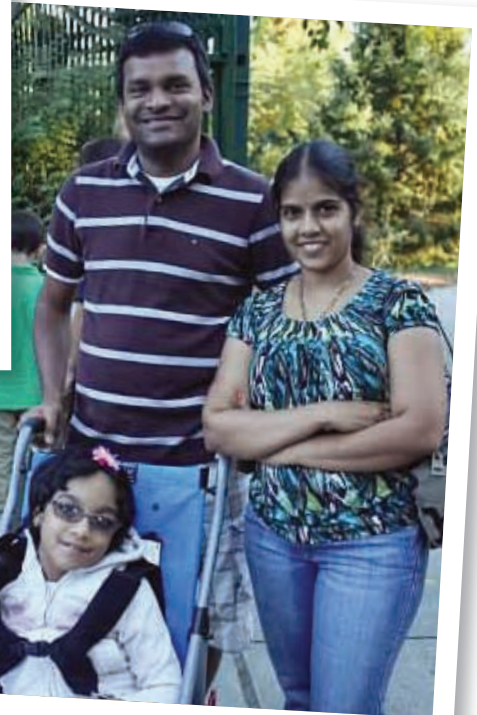
Approximately 100 students on the **Middlesex Middle School's 8th grade Navy Team** made over 300 blankets during an event organized by science teacher and Blankets for Premies founder, Kelly DePiano. These amazing students also managed to raise over \$2000 to support the Blankets for Premies program. We are so grateful for their efforts!



A group of wonderful seniors at **Maplewood Center** in Darien spent a day making blankets for our Blankets for Premies program. Thank you, Maplewood, for your time and efforts to support local families with premies!

## Annual family-friendly fall gathering at The Beardsley Zoo

We hosted our annual family-friendly fall gathering at The Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport on September 29, 2013. "A Wild Family Event" was attended by over 450 parents and children and was an overwhelming success!! Guests enjoyed private access to the zoo and all the animal exhibits, carousel rides, face painting, and crafts. Dinner was available for purchase at the specialty food trucks that were brought in for this event, including MELT MOBILE, Vanchetta, Chez Lenard of Ridgefield and Mister Softee of CT. (See our back cover for information on this year's fall family event at The Beardsley Zoo!) ♥



## Authors Night

On March 10, more than 40 guests gathered at the Westport Arts Center in Westport, Connecticut and shared an intimate, informative evening with authors **Jennifer Degl** and **Kasey Mathews**. The two women, both mothers of very premature babies, talked about the tumultuous journeys that followed the births of their daughters. Jennifer's book, *From Hope to Joy: A Memoir of a Mother's Determination and Her Micro Premie's Struggle to Beat the Odds* and Kasey's book, *Premie: Lessons of Life, Love and Motherhood*, are compelling memoirs of courage, faith, and love.

Many of the guests in attendance had dealt with similar situations, and shared their experiences in area hospitals' Neonatal Intensive Care Units and in their first months at home. It was a wonderful night of sharing and support! ❤️



*Kasey Mathews and Jennifer Degl sign books for attendees*



*Members of the audience listen to the authors speak*

## Help us go green!

Get future TTMF newsletters via email — less paper, more trees! Simply email us at [info@ttmf.org](mailto:info@ttmf.org) with your name and preferred email address. Thank you!



## "A Night of Miracles" Gala

More than 300 friends and supporters attended our 9th annual Spring Gala at The Inn at Longshore in Westport. The sold-out event included cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and a strolling dinner, dancing to the sounds

of the Tremors, and silent and live auctions. Many "tiny miracles" participated in the event. Wearing badges with their names and birth weights (many were born weighing less than two pounds), these miracle children



Board Member Terri Dusch, Line Blanco, Mackenzie Pretty and Lisa Sabino all of Westport



C.D. and Ginger Wilson and their children Christopher and Lily of Weston and Ginger's father Cliff Harding from Wappingers Falls, NY

Tiny miracles greeting guests at the door were Teagan Church of Westport, Lola Triay of Stamford, Ella and Olivia Sawala of Westport, Julia Broder of Fairfield, and Grace and Nicholas Noto of Fairfield



Board member Eric Broder, Dr. Vicki Smetak, Dr. Meltem Seli, Dr. Emre Seli and Board President Leelee Klein



Gala co-chairs Lisa Broder of Fairfield, Sela Esposito of Weston and Jennifer Lau of Westport



**Gala Committee 2014 (Left to Right):**  
Bottom row: Tammy Roberts and Co-Chair Sela Esposito of Weston, Co-Chair Lisa Broder of Fairfield and Co-Chair Jen Lau of Westport, President Leelee Klein, Kristie Godina of Stamford. Top Row: Ariane Triay of Stamford, Katarina Bridova of Norwalk, Peggy Sawala of Westport, PJ Marcella of New Canaan and Terri Dusch of Westport. Missing from the picture are Brooke Gies, Caitlin Whitacre, Zerlina Hayes and Victoria Trepp all of Darien and Carrie Cromwell-Hunt and Renee Greenlee of Westport.

TTMF Finance and Database Manager Kerry Wagner of Westport and Program Manager Kelley Chapman of Norwalk





and teens welcomed the guests and mingled during the party. A touching video showed many "miracles" TTMF has shared: a tiny baby starting to thrive through the combination of dedicated medical services and the love

of parents; the first time a mother holds her tiny infant; and the joyous day of bringing that child home. This year's gala was the single most successful fundraising event in the history of The Tiny Miracles Foundation! ♥



Steve Jakab and Susan Chudwick of Bridgeport Hospital Foundation and Ginger Wilson of Weston



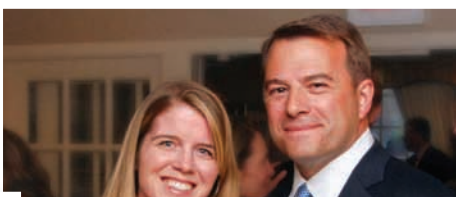
Pictures of before and after Miracles adorned the room



Stamford Hospital Neonatologist Dr. Jennifer J. Bragg of Old Greenwich and her husband Winston



Tara and Real Leclerc Of Darien



Diageo Sponsored an ice bar!



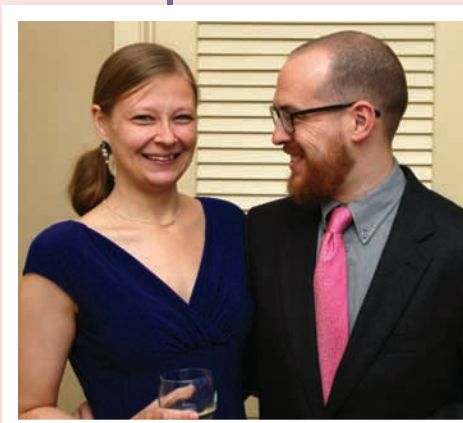
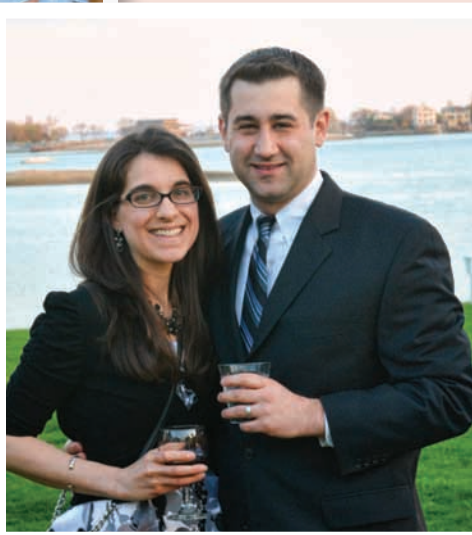
Robyn and Dan Olson of New Canaan

Dr. and Mrs William Potter of Greenwich view the wall of miracles



Miracle Julia Broder of Fairfield

Laura and Brett DeShay of Newtown, CT



Stay tuned for more information on our special 10th Anniversary grand celebration... coming in the spring of 2015!



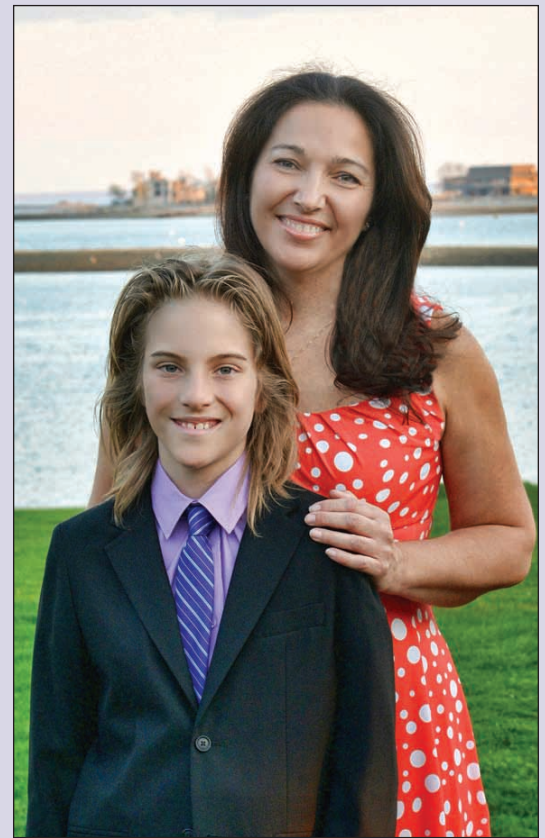
## Volunteer Spotlight: Marisela Esposito

*We are blessed with many wonderful volunteers and each year we like to spotlight one of them. In this issue, we proudly introduce Marisela Esposito...*

Sela has been living in Weston for 22 years. In July of 2001, she and her husband, Seve, unexpectedly delivered twin daughters at 21 weeks, due to pregnancy complications. The babies, unfortunately, were born too early to survive. In March of 2003, Sela gave birth to Dante, a 25 week micro-preemie, weighing 1 lb. 15 oz., at Norwalk Hospital. The day that Dante was born, Seve took a photo of his and Dante's tiny hands. The photo was so striking that when Dante was released to go home, Sela and Seve gave a print of the photo to the Norwalk NICU. Several years later, with Sela and Seve's permission, that photo became part of The Tiny Miracles Foundation.

When Sela met Gwen Noto at an event in 2008, she knew she wanted to be more involved with TTMF. When time allowed in 2011, she trained as a Parent Mentor for Norwalk Hospital. Sela vividly remembers her first day as a mentor when she provided much-needed support to a bereaved mother of 21-week twin girls. She remembers feeling nervous but realized it was something which she needed to do. "My first mentoring experience was the most difficult yet the most rewarding thing I've ever done. I left feeling like I was there that day for a purpose and was really able to help this mom and her husband." Sela continues to be a Parent Mentor at Norwalk Hospital and still finds the experience rewarding. "Mentoring allows me to continue my healing process while honoring the memory of my twin daughters and offering hope and strength to preemie parents in honor of Dante and all of his struggles throughout his NICU rollercoaster ride."

Sela joined the TTMF Board in 2012 and serves on the Fundraising, Financial Assistance Program (FAP) and PR/Marketing committees. "Being a part of these committees allows me to experience and be a part of the "full circle" of what TTMF is all about." In addition to countless hours of envelope stuffing, fleece cutting, and other volunteer efforts, Sela also served as co-chair for this year's enormously successful Tiny Miracles gala in May. ♥



*Marisela Esposito with her son, Dante  
Photo by: Joyce Laitman Photography*



*Dante's newborn finger next to his father, Seve's, finger, taken in the Norwalk NICU in 2003*

## Help us help others!



We are looking for volunteers in many different areas.

Whether you want a long term, weekly commitment or just to help out once in a while, we would love for you to join our volunteer family!

**Please contact our Program Manager at [MichelleDeRocco@ttmf.org](mailto:MichelleDeRocco@ttmf.org).**

Our Board of Directors has had a very busy and productive year. Our biggest goal was to hire a full-time Executive Director to help us manage our growing organization, and we were fortunate to have found **George Colabella**, who began in May. You can read about his extensive background in the nonprofit sector at [www.ttmf.org/george-colabella](http://www.ttmf.org/george-colabella). Our co-founder **Gwen Noto**, who served as part-time Executive Director for 3 years, remains an active leader on our board.



Kelley Chapman

Our newly formed committees have helped our volunteers and board members to more effectively manage the office operations, programs, and fundraising activities. In December, our wonderful long-time program manager, **Kelley Chapman**, announced she was planning to relocate to the South with her family, and we were fortunate to have ample time to hire and train our new program manager,



Gwen Noto and Leelee Klein

**Michelle De Rocco**. Enjoy the great pictures of the bittersweet farewell celebration for Kelley and Gwen. The commitment and love they have shown to TTMF over the years is immeasurable, and we are deeply grateful to them both.



The Tiny Miracles Foundation 2014-2015 Board of Directors (L-R) Peggy Sawala and Terri Dusch of Westport, Sela Esposito of Weston, Peter Olsen and Ashley Dineen of Darien, Ariane Triay of Stamford, Eric Broder of Fairfield, Executive Director George Colabella, Co-Founder Gwen Noto of Fairfield, President Leelee Klein of Darien, Kristie Godina of Stamford, P.J. Marcella of New Canaan, Rich Goldman of Old Greenwich and Lori Church of Westport. Missing from picture: Patty Cunningham, Caitlin Whitacre, and Rob Duffy, all from Darien, and Linda Queenan of Ridgefield.

Long-time board member **Cheryl Egan** retired this year. Her development of the Tiny Treasures program, her 7 years of parent mentoring, and her effective fundraising ability all contributed greatly to our growth and success. **Kerry Hanson** has also completed her term on the Board. Kerry chaired many successful fundraising events and did an amazing job decorating our resource room at Bridgeport Hospital. We are grateful for both Cheryl and Kerry's hard work and dedication. Thank you both!

We added three new board members: **Kristie Esterly Godina** of Stamford, **Peter H. Olson** of Darien, and **Caitlin J. M. Whitacre** of Darien. They each bring special talents and passions to our team. Learn more about them at [www.ttmf.org/board-member-biographies](http://www.ttmf.org/board-member-biographies).

We are looking forward to the year ahead, as we celebrate our 10-year anniversary of serving the preemie parent community!

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Lori Church	P.J. Marcella
Robert J. Duffy	Peter H. Olson
Marisela Esposito	Linda Queenan
Kristie Esterly Godina	Ariane deBraux Triay
	Caitlin J. M. Whitacre

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- Meredith Daniels
- Cheryl Egan
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- Eila Johnson
- Tara Leclerc
- Kathy Konopka Streinger
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Norwalk Hospital
- Francine S. White, RN  
Norwalk Hospital

**STAFF**

Executive Director	George Colabella
Program and Office Manager	Michelle De Rocco
Finance and Database Manager	Kerry Wagner

This past winter, The Tiny Miracles Foundation had the opportunity for a unique partnership with the Fairfield University Charles F. Dolan School of Business. Board Member Terri Dusch introduced us to her friend, Mousumi Bose Godbole, assistant professor of marketing, who agreed to have her Consumer Behavior Class take on a special market research project for us. Three board members spent a day in the classroom teaching the students about The Tiny Miracles Foundation. The students then studied our online and print materials, and conducted interviews of families we had served as well as key TTMF volunteers, and donors. Each student presented a summary of their research and recommended changes to our marketing efforts. We have been fortunate to move forward on some of their suggestions with the help of one of the students, Rini Francis. Look for the changes to our website, Facebook page, and newsletters as we forge ahead into our 10th year, thanks to the great minds of these young students and their wonderful professor Dr. Godbole! ♥

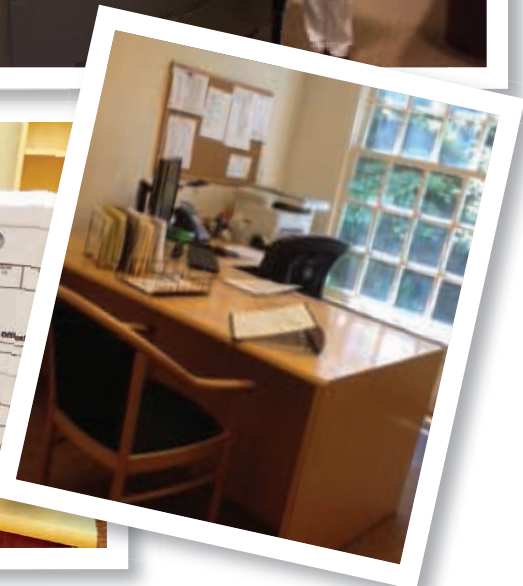


Students in the Fairfield University Charles F. Dolan School of Business Consumer Behavior Class

## We've moved!!

In April, we moved our offices to another location in Darien. The new office includes storage space. Now we can store everything under one roof!

Our new address is:  
The Tiny Miracles Foundation  
381 Post Road, 2nd floor  
Darien, CT 06820.



# We continue our collaboration with the March of Dimes



We are so grateful to the March of Dimes for providing another generous grant. This year's funding will be used to bolster our mentoring program at our four partner hospitals.



*A group of TTMF volunteers once again raised money and walked in the March of Dimes' annual March for Babies Walk in Fairfield last May.*

## We want to thank....



- **Over 40 Females™** ([www.over40females.com](http://www.over40females.com)) – for donating a portion of their proceeds from a speaker event at She la la in Westport
- **Princess Ball** ([www.princessball.org](http://www.princessball.org)) – for once again donating a portion of the proceeds from their annual father/daughter dinner dance; TTMF has been one of their chosen charities for the last five years!
- **Switch Beverage (now owned by Apple and Eve)** ([www.appleandeve.com](http://www.appleandeve.com)) – for donating their old phone system and office furniture to us when we moved into our new office space
- **CT Moms online** ([www.ctmomsonline.com](http://www.ctmomsonline.com)) – for making TTMF one of the recipients of their annual diaper drive; the donated diapers and supplies are given to preemie families throughout the year
- **Bling** ([www.shopbling.com](http://www.shopbling.com)) – for holding a private shopping event at their Darien store and giving a percentage of that night's sales to TTMF



# MIRACLE DONORS

July 1, 2013 - June 30, 2014

## \$15,000 and above

### *Robert and Cindy Citrone Fund*

Mr. and Mrs. Michael Klein  
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## \$10,000 to \$14,999

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*The Princess Ball*  
*Timothy and Rebecca Brown Charitable Foundation*  
*Tripp Family Charitable Fund*  
Mr. and Mrs. Miguel Triay  
Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Whitacre

## \$500 to \$999

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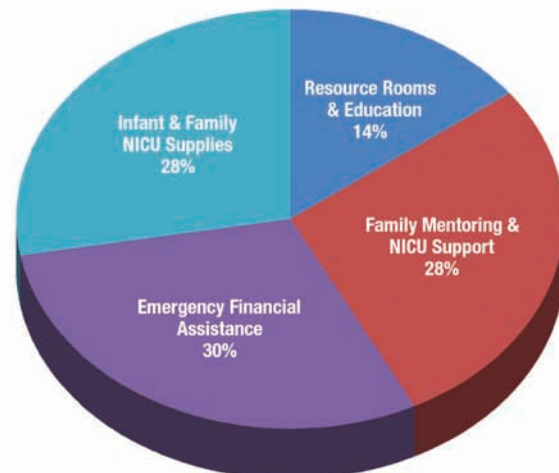
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