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A Letter from the President

Dear Friends & Supporters:

The Tiny Miracles Foundation has had a banner year! Our support services are now in full operation at Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals, and over the past year with the help of our first corporate grant we added three valuable programs, constructed a beautiful resource room at Norwalk Hospital, and hired an office manager!

With these improvements, Tiny Miracles has been able to reach more families than ever.

As you read about our achievements in this newsletter, please consider helping to keep our programs running. With the ever-increasing rate of premature birth, the ability to save babies born earlier and earlier, and research demonstrating the enormous impact of family-centered care on the long-term outlook for children born prematurely, TTMF's services are becoming ever more vital to area families and medical centers. Our future plans include bringing our services to the three remaining neonatal intensive care units in Fairfield County, initiating our NICU Enhancement Program to help local NICUs obtain the best possible life-saving equipment, training and technology, and sponsoring seminars on gentle neonatal care for area NICU professionals and families.

The stories in this report show that Tiny Miracles is working hard to improve the lives of premature babies and their families. We are eternally grateful to our many volunteers, our generous donors and area medical professionals who make our work possible. We thank you for your continued support!

Warm Regards,
Gwendolyn F. Noto
President & Executive Director

The Rupps – TTMF's First Miracle Family

In January 2005, when Chrissie and Brent Rupp's son Will was born at Stamford Hospital at 29 weeks gestation, his premature birth was a complete surprise. Chrissie did not know anyone who had had a premature baby, and did not have anywhere to turn for support. As chance would have it, one week after Will's birth TTMF officially launched its services at Stamford Hospital.

During the two months that Will spent in Stamford Hospital's neonatal intensive care unit, Chrissie took advantage of TTMF's Resource Room and on-site mentors, making the Rupps the first family to officially participate in TTMF's programs. And according to Chrissie, TTMF played a very reassuring role in the Rupp family's NICU experience.

When asked what aspect of TTMF was most helpful to her, Chrissie enthusiastically rattles off the numerous ways TTMF's services made her son's stay in the NICU, and his homecoming, a little bit easier. "The Resource Room was great—a little retreat to either be by myself or to chat with other mothers in the NICU. Sometimes the doctors would stop in, too. It was a nice getaway. Plus the room's books and photo albums to flip through helped a lot. And, most

Right:
Will Rupp spent two months in the NICU.

Far right:
Chrissie, Will and Brent Rupp now at home.



importantly," Chrissie adds, "being able to talk to other mothers who went through what I was going through at the time."

For mothers like Chrissie, having mentors who understand first hand the experience of having a preemie can make a world of difference. "Many people don't understand all that you are going through unless they have experienced it themselves," says Chrissie. "It helped me feel less scared and more in control to see these past NICU mothers able to grow from their NICU experiences; to see their children grow up healthy and happy, and many had healthy pregnancies later on. It gave me the confidence that if they could do it, I could too, and everything I was feeling was part of the whole process. It put a light at the end of the tunnel... I felt like people really cared and I wasn't so alone."

Baby Will is now a hearty toddler learning to walk and relishing life. But the impact of Will's premature birth will forever affect his parents. "Even a year later, it's comforting to be with people who truly understand," says Chrissie. Of some of the longer-term changes Chrissie explains, "I am able to let go of so much of the 'small stuff' in life a lot faster now—if it even affects me at all—because everything is put in perspective when you've had a child in the NICU."

Helping families like the Rupps endure the crisis of a premature birth is at the core of Tiny Miracles. And addressing the needs of these families even long after their NICU stay is why we are adding such programs as our "Preemie Parents Talk" Support Groups, to help preemie parents connect with one another and share their experiences going forward. ♥

Andor Capital Puts its Faith in Tiny Miracles

Last summer, Stamford-based Andor Capital Management Foundation gave a generous grant to The Tiny Miracles Foundation. In this lump-sum one-time grant, Andor underwrote one year of several programs that were not already funded by other sources, as well as one year of specific operational expenses. Andor's stated goal was to provide seed capital to a unique and promising grassroots organization that is doing novel and important work within the greater Fairfield and Westchester County communities. "TTMF is especially thankful to Andor for their confidence in us," stated TTMF president Gwen Noto. "It takes a great leap of faith to fund a start-up organization that has not yet had the opportunity to prove itself. Andor sought to understand our mission, and they made it clear that they share our vision and trust that we can deliver." And deliver we have. Since receiving the grant, TTMF has expanded our entire program to Norwalk Hospital, implemented the Financial Assistance Program in two hospitals, constructed the Norwalk Hospital Resource Room, created an additional 400 Tiny Treasures Welcome and Homecoming Starter Kits, and hired an office manager to help keep operations running. Not only did the Andor funding help get so many of these programs off the ground, it also paves the way for soliciting large grants from other corporate and private funding sources to keep these and other projects operating into the future. ♥

Did You Know?

In addition to our on-site support services at Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals, our Parent Support Network and Parent Support Groups are open to all area families. For more information or to be matched with a mentor, please call (203) 921-7427 or e-mail info@ttmf.org.

Norwalk Hospital Welcomes Tiny Miracles!

In April 2006, TTMF launched its programs at Norwalk Hospital. Our Norwalk expansion marks the second hospital in which TTMF offers its services on-site, after Stamford Hospital where TTMF has been operating since January 2005. The Norwalk project was spearheaded by TTMF board member, Kathy Konopka Streinger, and her husband Peter, whose twins Michael and Gabby were born prematurely at Norwalk Hospital in 2003. (See "Volunteer Profile" on page 6).

Among the panoply of TTMF services offered in Norwalk: in-hospital parent mentoring, parent support groups, the Tiny Treasures gift program, an on-site resource room, and a financial assistance program to help needy families. "Norwalk Hospital's administration and medical professionals have been extremely supportive of TTMF's mission and [the team] is working together to provide this very special service to NICU families," states Kathy.

The most elaborate portion of the project involved the physical construction of the Resource Room, which Kathy

oversaw. She describes the room as "a private haven that gives families access to TTMF's wonderful resources, complete with an extensive library of preemie literature, a computer with internet access, a kitchenette, a comfortable lounge and private powder room."

The Resource Room is also the site of TTMF's in-hospital mentoring services. The Mentoring Program connects new parents of premature infants with more experienced preemie parents who offer support, comfort and guidance through the often traumatic experience of having a premature baby, navigating the NICU, preparing for homecoming and caring for preemies at home, when parents find they are suddenly removed from the security and watchful eyes of the NICU staff.

The Tiny Treasures Program rounds out TTMF's offerings by helping ease parents into and out of the NICU. Upon each preemie's birth, TTMF's Welcome Packages give parents tools to promote bonding and parental involvement during their newborn's hospitalization. Upon discharge, our Homecare Starter Kits include hard-to-find preemie-related

"A private haven that gives families access to TTMF's wonderful resources."



supplies and resources to help care for their tiny newborns at home.

"We are thrilled to be able to reach out to families in these new communities," says TTMF President Gwen Noto. "And we look forward to a long and rewarding relationship with Norwalk Hospital to support the families under their excellent medical care." ♥

Financial Assistance Program Will Help Needy Families

Among the new programs initiated this year, TTMF's Financial Assistance Program provides emergency grants to needy families. The program was implemented at Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals in February 2006 after being underwritten by Stamford-based Andor Capital Management Foundation. The Financial Assistance Program is intended to defray non-medical costs that arise in connection with the extended hospitalization of tiny newborns, such as parents' transportation for hospital visits

and babysitting for older siblings who are often not permitted into NICUs. The program also offers assistance to families who are transitioning their babies home, such as helping to acquire specialized equipment, supplies, services or care for their infants upon discharge.

"It has been a dream of mine to get this program off the ground, and I am thrilled we were able to do it so soon," said TTMF president and co-founder Gwen Noto. "Having a preemie strains a family in so many ways, and adding financial stress on top of the medical,

emotional and other burdens can really max people out." In addition to helping the neediest of families, the goal of the Financial Assistance Program is to offer assistance to hard-working families who don't qualify for public aid, but who are hit especially hard by the financial hardships brought on by a premature birth.

The Financial Assistance Program is administered in partnership with the social work teams at Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals and provides grants of up to \$1,000 per family. ♥

2005 Carnival of Life a Huge Success; Next Year's Theme: "MINI but Mighty"



Photos from top: TTMF volunteer Carmen Murphy of Darien and her daughter Sarah; TTMF Mentees Rich and Jami Goldman of Greenwich with their daughter Samantha; "Raggedy Ann" (a.k.a. Mackenzie Biele).



On a warm, sunny Saturday last September, over 150 area families headed to the beach to celebrate the "Carnival of Life", the second annual Tiny Miracles Foundation fundraiser. With almost 500 guests, the event was sold out! Proceeds of over \$55,000 raised helped fund TTMF's programs offering support, information, supplies and assistance to families with premature infants during and immediately following their hospitalization in area neonatal intensive care units.

Held at Wee Burn Beach Club in Rowayton, CT, the family-oriented event featured children's activities such as moon bounces, pony rides, face painting, old-fashioned carnival games, and Hands On Pottery, as well as live children's entertainment by "Alex and the Kaleidoscope Band", "Pongo the Clown", "Party Safari", and "Ringo the Magician". To entertain parents, the silent auction featured a wide array of items, including children's parties, lessons, portrait sittings, family outings, wine-tastings, dinner parties and, of course, the ever popular coveted golf excursions. Throughout the day, the beachside luncheon buffet offered delicious fare for young and old alike.

New Canaan, CT-based MB Sports donated t-shirts that read, "I'm A Tiny Miracle" for the premies in attendance to wear at the event, in celebration of how far each has come. And the day certainly was a celebration of how far each "tiny miracle" had come! "We're thrilled that twice the number of families rallied this year to enjoy a day of fun for such a worthy cause," says TTMF's Event Chair Kimbel Biele. "The Carnival has really raised community awareness about The Tiny Miracles Foundation and how we can help local families."

Looking ahead to this year, TTMF has booked Wee Burn's Beach Club for September 17, 2006. "We've been so blessed these last two years with absolutely gorgeous weather, and attendees rave about how much they want to come back again!" says Kimbel. "This year we're adding to the excitement by raffling a Mini Cooper, a fitting tribute to our 'tiny miracles'." The Callari Auto Group, which owns BMW of Darien, Volvo of Westport, Chrysler Jeep Dodge of Stamford and Mini of Fairfield County, is acting as the first corporate sponsor of the Carnival, lending to the "Mini but Mighty" theme. All proceeds from the Carnival and the raffle will benefit The Tiny Miracles Foundation.

To be added to the Carnival of Life invitation list or for more information about the Mini Cooper raffle, contact TTMF at 203-921-7427 or info@ttmf.org. ♥



Photos from top: Nicholas and Thomas Noto of Fairfield; Jack Johnson of New Canaan; Pongo the Clown thrills the crowd.



BMW OF DARIEN
VOLVO OF WESTPORT
CALLARI AUTO GROUP
MINI OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY

Right: Event Chair Kimbel Biele of Rowayton with her twins Morgan and Mackenzie.

Left: "Mini But Mighty" Tiny Miracles Morgan and Mackenzie Biele perch atop a Mini Cooper. The twins helped to pick the car at Mini of Fairfield County that will soon be raffled at the 3rd annual Carnival of Life.



Research Shows That Gentle Care and Parental Support Can Improve Long-Term Outcomes For Premies

A recent article published in *The New York Times* highlighted the work of Dr. Heidelise Als of Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital in Boston, to reform neonatal intensive care units (NICUs) into more womb-like environments and to have parents intimately involved in their babies' care. Research has shown that babies who are cared for using this approach have fewer medical complications, shorter hospital stays, and better neurological development.

Premature birth is on the rise. Of the 4 million babies born in the United States each year, 500,000 are born prematurely — a 29% increase from two decades ago. At the same time, vastly improved technologies are keeping smaller babies alive. In the 1970's, fewer than 20% of newborns weighing less than 2.2 pounds — approximately 3 months premature — survived. Since then, advances in medicine and technology have boosted the survival rate to 70%, and even higher for babies born closer to term.

While these improvements in care are a blessing, they also have unintended consequences. In utero, a baby floats in a warm, dark, quiet, soothing cocoon where it is in constant communication and synch with its mother. But a premature baby is exposed to a barrage of harsh lights, sounds, smells and stimuli much earlier than it is physically and neurologically ready to endure. In many cases, the critical mother-baby bond is lost when

the fragile baby is put into an incubator, attached to a maze of oxygen tubes, IVs, leads and monitors and handled frequently for invasive and painful medical procedures. Such a radical departure from a baby's natural growth interferes with proper brain development and contributes to brain-related problems down the road. As a result, children born prematurely are disproportionately prone to learning disabilities and psychiatric illnesses, like anxiety and attention-deficit disorder.

But Dr. Als has demonstrated that changing basic NICU procedures to better simulate the womb — dimming the lights, talking quietly, surrounding babies with a "nest" of blankets, allowing frequent close physical and emotional contact with mothers, and ensuring long periods of uninterrupted rest in quiet darkness — can significantly improve preemies' development. Babies receiving medical care organized around the needs of the infants and their families spend less time in the NICU, grow faster, resist infection better, and have better motor skills, enhanced brain function and increased ability to focus attention. Moreover, when parents are very involved in their child's care and are provided positive support, assistive services and a hopeful attitude, the long-term emotional and cognitive outlook for premature children improves dramatically.

"Dr. Als's work is monumental," remarks TTMF President Gwen Noto. "And it underscores the importance of the work Tiny Miracles does to improve the outcomes for premature babies and their families. We strive to promote mother-baby bonding, to empower parental involvement in neonatal care, to support and educate parents, and most of all, to offer hope." Gwen explains as she points out the Ookie® scent-retaining doll and tiny preemie outfit included in TTMF's Tiny Treasures Welcome Kits designed to help parents become comfortable caring for their tiny baby. "In the face of their baby's fragile condition and the intensely medical NICU environment, most parents think there's little they can do to help. But Dr. Als's research shows that parents' soft voices, soothing touch and involvement in their infant's daily care helps not only to heal the parents' own suffering and ease family stress, but significantly improves their baby's prognosis." emphasizes Gwen. "It's amazing for parents to realize that they really can make a huge difference. And it's amazing to realize the incredible significance of the work being done by The Tiny Miracles Foundation."

For more information about Dr. Als's pioneering research and NICU programs, please see the full text of *The New York Times* article, "A Second Womb", by Paul Raeburn (August 14, 2005), at www.nytimes.com.♥



Mark Your Calendars!

This year's
"Carnival of Life"
will be held at
Wee Burn's Beach Club
on Sunday,
September 17, 2006.
Invitations to follow!

TTMF Hires its First Employee: Erika Morro, Office Manager

We are proud to announce that Erika Morro has joined our team! Erika is TTMF's first hire and serves as office manager, the organization's only paid position. She has learned the ropes quickly as she has become the point-person for communication to our 65 volunteers, eagerly tackled a variety of administrative projects, and is forging media and business relationships on behalf of TTMF. Erika is also the friendly—and bilingual—voice responding to our increasingly frequent phone inquiries.

Erika's 15 years of corporate experience helps ensure that TTMF runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Previously a Manager of Operations for Crompton Corporation, she has also worked for Becton Dickinson and Sony Corporations. Erika earned her B.S. in Business from Florida State University and her M.B.A. in International Business and Management Information Systems from Sacred Heart University. She is passionate about TTMF's mission and, in her own words, is "very excited to be working for such a worthy cause!" Erika resides in Darien with her husband Anthony and their two sons, Grant and Jake. ♥



TTMF Office Manager, Erika Morro, and Stamford Hospital Social Worker, Annette Maiberger

Three New Members Join the TTMF Board of Directors

Three mothers of preemies have joined the Board of The Tiny Miracles Foundation, bringing the total number of Board members to nine.

Eila Johnson has hit the ground running overseeing TTMF Press and Public Relations. Eila brings significant marketing experience to her role at TTMF, including as Marketing Manager in the Office of the Chairman at Jefferies & Company, Inc., Brand Manager at Kraft Foods, and president of a personal chef business & food product consultancy. Eila holds a B.A. from Colgate University and received her M.B.A. from Northwestern's Kellogg Graduate School of Management. Thanks to Eila's diligent pursuit of local and national periodicals, TTMF was featured in more than 25 news articles this past year, including a write-up in one of the premier editions of the nationally circulated *Preemie Magazine*. Eila lives in New Canaan, CT with her husband Jeff and their son Jack, who was born at 32 weeks gestation in 2003.

As TTMF's Norwalk Hospital Liaison, **Kathy Konopka Streinger** (see Volunteer Profile, on page 6) has been the driving force behind TTMF's expansion into Norwalk Hospital and was instrumental in securing the generous grant from Andor Capital Management Foundation. Kathy's work experience includes structuring and negotiating large domestic and international joint ventures at GE Capital Corporate and serving as a Vice President in the Technology Group at GE Equity, where she invested in and served on the boards of various software companies. Kathy was also the CFO and Acting General Manager of Rabbit Ears Productions and a Senior Auditor at Price Waterhouse in New York. Kathy received her B.S. from Fairfield University,



TTMF 2005-2006 Board members from left to right: (front) Elizabeth Klein of Darien, Kimbel Biele of Rowayton, Eila Johnson of New Canaan, Eileen Thomas of New Canaan; (back) Lisa Tantillo of Westport, Patricia Cunningham of Darien, Gwendolyn Noto of Fairfield, Kathy Konopka Streinger of New Canaan, and Rebecca Esposito of Darien.

obtained C.P.A. certification in New York State, received her Executive M.B.A. from the Wharton School of Business and attended the University of Bridgeport School of Law. Kathy has recently moved from Pound Ridge, NY to New Canaan, CT, with her husband Peter, their four-year-old daughter Maggie and two-year-old twins, Michael and Gabrielle, who were born at 25 weeks gestation in 2003.

Eileen Thomas is spearheading Corporate Fundraising for TTMF, using her extensive experience with non-profits as her springboard. Eileen worked as a management consultant in the Stamford, CT office of McKinsey and Company has served as Vice Chair of Women in Need, a \$30 million agency operating shelters and recovery programs for homeless women and children in New York City. Eileen received her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and a M.B.A., with distinction, from the Wharton School of Business. Eileen and her husband James live in New Canaan, CT, with their three children, Ian, born 12 weeks premature, Luke and Mary Grace. ♥

It's been a busy year!

In 2005...

- over 1,000 babies were born prematurely in the five Fairfield County hospitals
- TTMF launched our first programs at Stamford Hospital
- TTMF mentored over 100 families in our Resource Room at Stamford Hospital
- TTMF matched over 20 families with mentors
- TTMF trained over 20 new volunteers to add to our 40 existing volunteers
- TTMF raised \$168,000 to supplement and expand our support programs
- TTMF delivered 182 Tiny Treasures bags to preemie families at Stamford Hospital
- TTMF was featured in the nationally circulated *Preemie Magazine* and over 25 times in local papers!

In 2006...

- TTMF initiated monthly Preemie Parent Support Groups at Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals
- TTMF implemented our Financial Assistance Program to help needy families
- TTMF opened our Resource Room at Norwalk Hospital
- TTMF launched our support services at Norwalk Hospital
- TTMF will deliver 350 Tiny Treasures bags to families at Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals
- TTMF will mentor or match over 200 area families and help meet their needs

The Tiny Miracles Foundation's story is a compelling one. In the past year, our organization has been featured in over 25 articles published in over a dozen periodicals, including:

Bedford News Review
Darien Times (3 articles)
Darien News-Review (4 articles)
Fairfield Minuteman
Greenwich Post (cover story)

New Canaan Advertiser (3 articles)
New Canaan-Darien-Rowayton Magazine (2 articles)
New Canaan News-Review (4 articles)
Norwalk Citizen News
Preemie Magazine (as featured organization)
Stamford Advocate
Stamford Hospital's "Healthline" Quarterly Newsletter
Weston Forum (cover story)
Wilton Bulletin (4 articles, including a cover story)

Volunteer Profile

In each edition we will profile one of our dedicated volunteers or Board Members. In this issue we proudly introduce Director Kathy Konopka Streinger, Norwalk Hospital Liaison.

TTMF volunteer and board member Kathy Konopka Streinger understands all too well the angst of having a child in the neonatal intensive care unit. Kathy and her husband Peter had twins, Michael and Gabrielle (Gabby), born at just 25 weeks gestation in 2003. Each child weighed one and a half pounds and each spent 4 months in the NICUs at Norwalk and Yale-New Haven Hospitals.

During their prolonged hospitalizations, Gabby and Michael struggled to survive. In addition to the “typical” complications expected with such extremely premature babies (known as “micro-preemies”), Gabby developed necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC), a life-threatening intestinal disease with no cure, which is a leading cause of death among premature babies. She underwent emergency surgery for the condition, but during her recovery, Gabby suddenly stopped breathing, lapsed into a coma, and developed a rare heart arrhythmia doctors had trouble controlling. Gabby spent the next two months at Yale, teetering on the brink of survival.

Meanwhile, throughout his NICU stay, Michael experienced severe suck, swallow and breathing issues that caused him frequently to stop breathing and turn blue. And he too required several emergency surgeries, for which he was transferred to Yale.

With her babies hooked up to countless machines, on “warmers”, wearing only diapers, and fighting for their lives, Kathy spent months shuttling back and forth between NICUs and pumping breast milk around the clock, while doing her best to care for her then 2-year-old daughter Maggie. Needless to say, the Streingers were traumatized the entire experience. “The fear of the unknown was heavy on our minds,” says Kathy. “If our babies survived, what would their lives be like given the inevitable disabilities they would face?” They knew no one with similar experiences to draw comfort or hope from, and at the time, The Tiny Miracles Foundation was still under development.

Then Kathy met TTMF board member Kimbel Biele, and the two instantly bonded over their shared experience of having twins born severely prematurely. Kimbel was chairing TTMF’s first annual fundraiser, “The Carnival of Life”, and invited the Streingers to attend the event. At the event, Kathy met several preemie families and saw many “tiny miracles” who had grown to 4, 5 and 6 years old. Kathy especially remembers TTMF president Gwen Noto’s son Thomas, another 25-weeker who had, like Kathy’s own son Michael, suffered severe retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) eye hemorrhaging that can lead to blindness. “Thomas was wearing his glasses and happily running around with the other kids. Seeing him run, laugh and play gave us so much hope that someday our Michael would walk, run, play and laugh with other children,” reminisces Kathy.

“We are eternally grateful to Norwalk and Yale-New Haven Hospitals and the wonderful NICU doctors and nurses for safely delivering and caring for Michael and Gabby,” emphasizes Kathy. She is also thankful for the comfort and understanding she received from TTMF volunteers back then. Today Kathy is an active Parent Mentor, helping other families facing similar hardships. “Being there to listen to other preemie families and share my relevant experiences has been very rewarding and has helped these families better cope with the roller coaster experiences of the NICU as well as post-NICU concerns.”

In her continued spirit of giving back to both Tiny Miracles and the hospitals that she credits with saving her children’s lives, Kathy joined TTMF’s board of directors and has spearheaded the effort to bring TTMF to Norwalk Hospital. (See “Norwalk



Kathy Konopka Streinger pictured with her husband, Peter, daughter Maggie and “tiny miracles” Gabrielle and Michael at TTMF’s 2005 Carnival of Life.

Hospital Welcomes TTMF”, on page 2). As the board’s Norwalk Hospital Liaison, Kathy initially met with Norwalk Hospital administrators to explain TTMF’s mission and programs, then expertly coordinated the renovation and decoration of the Resource Room, and now ensures the smooth introduction of our support programs at the hospital by working closely with their neonatologists, nurses and administrators. It was also Kathy’s dedication to TTMF, and helping preemie families, that was responsible for TTMF’s introduction to Andor Capital (see “Andor Capital Puts its Faith in Tiny Miracles”, on page 2)

And as for her own “tiny miracles”? Today, Gabby is a “verbose, petite fireball who keeps up with her 4-year-old sister,” reports Kathy. Although she currently receives physical therapy for low muscle tone and weak core strength, she attends preschool, Baby Ballet and tumbling classes, and especially enjoys her New Canaan Nature Center classes. Turning to Michael, Kathy croons, “Michael is affectionate, sweet and happy.” But as Michael toodles off, Kathy explains that Michael is working hard to overcome his developmental delays. She ticks off the long list of intensive therapies Michael receives regularly: physical, occupational, speech, feeding and vision therapies and Applied Behavioral Analysis. “He wears glasses (when he keeps them on) and has been fitted for leg splints.” And then, Kathy adds proudly, “But he is starting to communicate with words and gestures and he knows his alphabet.” At 2 years old, Michael “is walking... even learning to run, laughing a lot and starting to interact with other children, often with a friendly hug and kiss,” this tireless mother says before returning to a game with her three children. ♥

A Resounding Thank You to our Volunteers

The immense effort that goes into growing The Tiny Miracles Foundation and reaching out to families in need could not be done without the hard work and dedication of our volunteers and board members. As a tribute to their efforts and as a way to show our gratitude, TTMF Vice President Elizabeth (Leelee) Klein and her husband Michael graciously hosted TTMF's volunteers for a January "Thank You Dinner" at Wee Burn Country Club in Darien, CT. TTMF was thrilled that representatives from Stamford Hospital attended the event as well.

The evening included a cocktail hour, dinner and a highly competitive bowling match at Wee Burn's infamous underground bowling lanes. "We've all volunteered countless hours to TTMF because either we have experienced the birth of our own premie, or have a dear friend or relative who has gone through this incredibly trying time," says board member Eila Johnson. "This night gave us a chance to get to know each other's lighter sides, outside of our volunteering, mentoring and fundraising roles. It was a great opportunity—and lots of fun!"

TTMF is eternally thankful to all of its volunteers for their hard work and commitment to helping premature babies and their families. ♥



TTMF volunteers enjoy the thank you party.



TTMF President Gwen Noto, Vice President Elizabeth Klein and Board Member Eila Johnson.



Stamford Hospital's Director of Pediatrics, Dr. Gerald Rakos, M.D., and Manager of Maternal Child Health Services, Kathy Livolsi, RN, peruse TTMF's recent press.

"TTMF is eternally thankful to all of its volunteers for their hard work and commitment to helping premature babies and their families"

TTMF Rolls Out "Premie Parents Talk" Support Groups

Tiny Miracles has been expanding upward and outward. In addition to offering our NICU support services in both the Stamford and Norwalk Hospitals, we have also added "Premie Parents Talk" support groups for parents of premature babies of all ages to connect, whether their babies are currently in the NICU or have transitioned home.

The groups, which debuted in March, are the first organized support groups for parents of premies in the Fairfield County area. "There was no preemie support of any kind when my girls were born, and I felt very isolated," remembers TTMF Vice President Elizabeth (Leelee) Klein, whose twin daughters were born at 26 weeks gestation in 2000. "It would have helped me tremendously had I known all the wonderful mothers of premies I now know," Leelee said.

For some families, it's the time after their premie comes home from the NICU that is most daunting. "That's when I really felt alone," says board member Eileen Thomas of the period after her son Ian, a 28-weeker, came home from the hospital. "There were no nurses watching over us and no other moms to confer with. And there were so many new things to deal with. It was unfathomable to me that my son would ever grow out of his medical problems and approach anything that resembled a normal little boy." Eileen explains. "The most important thing for me was meeting people who made it through [to] the other side.... Meeting other families who had endured similar or more difficult circumstances and seeing how healthy their children were and how well they functioned several years later was the

most valuable thing anyone did for me at that time."

The "Premie Parents Talk" groups, which are free of charge, meet at Norwalk Hospital the second Tuesday of each month at 10am and at Stamford Hospital the last Tuesdays of each month at 7pm. Led by TTMF parent mentors with guidance from licensed social workers, the support groups are a forum where parents of premies can connect with each other and offer comfort, guidance and consolation in an understanding environment. The support groups will also feature professional guest speakers in alternating months to address common premie medical, physical, developmental, cognitive, behavioral, emotional and nutritional conditions and therapies as well as other family concerns. ♥

TTMF Plays Role in Stamford Hospital's Top Nursing Award

This past July, Stamford Hospital invited The Tiny Miracles Foundation to participate in the American Nursing Credentialing Center's (ANCC) site visit to evaluate the hospital for the nation's top nursing award, the Magnet Recognition Program®. TTMF's President, Gwen Noto, and Vice President, Elizabeth (Leelee) Klein, were honored to meet with ANCC appraisers to discuss TTMF's relationship with Stamford Hospital and its nursing staff.

The Magnet Recognition Program® recognizes healthcare organizations that demonstrate excellence in nursing philosophy and practice, adherence to national standards for improving patient care, leadership and sensitivity to cultural and

ethnic adversity. The appraisers' multi-day hospital visit was the last step in a lengthy and rigorous evaluation process. TTMF represented Stamford Hospital's connection with key community service organizations as well as their commitment to family-centered care.

In August, the ANCC awarded Stamford Hospital Magnet™ Recognition, an honor bestowed upon only the top 3% of the nation's hospitals. Stamford Hospital is the only Magnet™ hospital in Fairfield County and one of only three Magnet™ hospitals in Connecticut. TTMF was proud to take part in the Magnet™ evaluation process and to share our high regard for Stamford Hospital and its nursing staff. ♥

How Your Generous Donation Could Help

- ♥ \$25 will supply 2 NICU Welcome bags
- ♥ \$50 will purchase 2 Tiny Treasures Homecare Starter Kits
- ♥ \$100 will buy 5 books for a hospital Resource Room
- ♥ \$200 will pay for 1 month of Premie Parent Support Groups
- ♥ \$500 will fund 1 month of in-home nursing care for a needy family
- ♥ \$1,000 will provide an emergency grant to a needy family
- ♥ \$1,500 will purchase a breast pump for the hospital to lend a preemie mother
- ♥ \$ 2,500 will support 1 year of Premie Parents Talk Support Groups at one hospital
- ♥ \$25,000 will build a Resource Room in an area hospital

We Strive To Advance The Best Care for Preemies

Looking to the future, The Tiny Miracles Foundation strives to promote the best care possible for preemies in Fairfield County, and the families that love and care for them. As funding and volunteer resources continue to grow, so will we.

It has been a year of tremendous success and growth for our organization, but there is so much more we can do to help parents of preemies get through this very stressful time with confidence, warmth and understanding.

We believe the gentle care and parental involvement Dr. Als (see "Research Shows...", on page 4) promotes is of utmost importance. We want preemie care in Fairfield County

to move in that more soothing direction. To do so, will mean supporting both parents and our area NICUs going forward:

- We will continue to provide high quality support and education to parents while in area NICUs and after discharge. As funding and volunteer resources permits, our goal is to expand services to all five area NICUs over the next several years;
- We strive to stay abreast of the latest research on preemie care and its outcomes, and we seek to provide parents and NICUs with information and supplies that will positively affect the earliest development of preemies, while strengthening the parental bond;

- We want all parents to feel empowered in the care of their babies regardless of their economic resources. Our Financial Assistance Program will expand to all Fairfield County NICUs, as funding permits;
- We aspire to earmark funds to enhance our area NICUs by eventually providing the newest technology, equipment and access to professional seminars so that Fairfield County's NICUs can be a model of best possible care for our babies who are born too early.

"As funding and volunteer resources continue to grow, so will we."

Mailing label

stamp

