the tiny view minacles® FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER | FALL 2019

SERVING THE SMALLEST MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Fifteen years ago Gwen Noto and Meredith Daniels sat at a kitchen table. Both mothers of severely premature babies, they shared the many challenges, emotions, and concerns they faced. These two dynamic and empathetic women realized that although medical care was exceptional, they were left to deal with their feelings on their own. It was at that point that they realized that no parent should have to face such an experience alone. They resolved to do something about it, and The Tiny Miracles Foundation was born.

Little did these two women realize that they had put into motion an organization that would benefit thousands and that their vision would lead to the pre-eminent organization



of its kind, setting the standards for similarly concerned groups across the nation. Now in 2019, their legacy continues. With partnerships with 5 hospitals, a full continuum of services, programs, assistance, and touching the lives of more than 1,200 preemies each year, their vision has become a reality. Thank you Gwen and Meredith. You are both true miracles.

> George Colabella EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

George Colabella has been the Executive Director of TTMF since 2014

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

am honored to have been re-elected for a second term as President of the Board, allowing me to continue our strategic direction. Building a stronger foundation that allows for the continued growth and enrichment of our programs, will ensure the longevity of TTMF

This year we had the pleasure of the addition of two new Board of Directors and moms of preemies: Laura DeShay of Newtown and Karen M. Sutton, M.D. of Riverside.

Our dedicated Board remains committed to advancing the mission of The Tiny Miracles Foundation and are grateful for the collective efforts of our many volunteers, donors, and staff.

> Marisela Esposito PRESIDENT



LEADERSHIP

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IN MEMORIAM

t is with heartfelt sadness and sympathy that the entire Tiny Miracles family mourns the passing of Dr. Jeffrey Bartlett. Dr. Bartlett, Director of Neonatology of Western Connecticut Health Network, was a dynamic advocate for the care, nurturing, and support of premature babies and their families. As a Member of the Tiny Miracles Medical Advisory Board, Dr. Bartlett provided valuable insights as to the journey of these vulnerable babies and their parents. Dr. Bartlett will be missed but his legacy shall continue to inspire all whose lives he touched.



Thank you so much! Your organization is truly the best. If only the rest of the world worked this efficiently. -NEONATOLOGIST FROM STAMFORD HOSPITAL

We would like to thank you for all of your support while our son was in the NICU. Your visits and comforting words were much appreciated. It was nice to hear other stories to help us through the experience. –MOM OF 30 WEEKER

Muchisimas gracias Dios los bendiga y gracias por su bondad. –MOM OF 23 WEEKER AT YALE

I want to thank everyone for all the love and support these past 71 days. As much as we're ready to move onto this next chapter in our lives, we look back and remember where it all started. Our little one will always be a tiny miracle. –MOM OF 29 WEEKER AT DANBURY HOSPITAL

JOURNEY THROUGH A MIRACLE

ur 2018 gala Journey Through A Miracle was held on November 3rd at the Country Club of Darien, in conjunction with Prematurity Month The Awareness event. chaired by Ashley Dineen and PJ Marcella, both mothers of premature babies and founding board members. Guests and sponsors were given a snapshot into the road of prematurity that families endure. The video shown captured the grief, joy, and struggles of families that The Tiny Miracles Foundation has supported through our extensive programs. The extraordinary physician that was at

the forefront of providing comfort, support, solace, and hope to so many families, Dr. Richard R. Viscarello, was a natural choice as the evening's honoree. Adding to the merriment was the music provided by Billy Joel band member and recording artist Mike DelGuidice. The evening proved to not only be one of joyous celebration, but a most successful fundraising event.

 Mike and Kristie Godina 2 Dr. & Mrs. John Ciannella, Drs. Shruti & Rahul Gupta 3 Mike DelGuidice 4 Melissa & Walter Lobo, Laura & Blake Franchi, Krystle LaManna 5 Guests bidding on the paddle raise





"You are changing the world one family at a time." —MOM OF 32 WEEK TWINS

C

MIRACLE STORY

y Tiny Miracle Twins entered the world at 28 weeks. What started as a routine OBGYN appointment at my doctor's office, resulted in going to Norwalk hospital for monitoring of my blood pressure and having to stay overnight. Being pregnant and knowing you are having twins, you become aware of all the scary things that are associated with a twin pregnancy. We always hope we are the exception and will carry full term with no issues, only to find out that Twin B was significantly smaller than Twin A and I would need to now transfer to Danbury hospital for further care and monitoring. I found out that I would be bedridden until my delivery. How can this be? I arrived at Danbury Hospital and made friends with the nurses, who are now family. Every day I memorized my schedule for medications, sonograms and fetal monitoring as well as memorizing the doctor's schedule . Ten days in Antepartum care will drive you crazy! I decided to take a positive outlook and make the most out of it.

During my stay, I met Marisela from TTMF, who spoke to me about the foundation and the support they not only give to babies but to parents as well. My husband got to attend a TTMF Dad meet up prior to our twins arriving. This was amazing for him to have open and honest dialogue about raising preemies. Honestly, I thought "I won't need TTMF, I'm going full term with these babies." January 25th, my blood pressure had been high all day, even with the administration of medicine, I couldn't get it under control. By 12am on January 26th, my doctor decided it was time to deliver and at 3:33am my twin 28 week girls entered the world.

Navigating the NICU is difficult and extremely intimidating. TTMF



gave so much emotional support and knowledge about navigating the NICU. The mentors made us feel so welcome and warm. Knowing there are families out there that have travelled on this very same journey was comforting. My husband and I did not know anyone that had preemies prior to getting to know the Tiny Miracles families. At the time of our girls' arrival, I did not have a car to go back and forth to the hospital & my husband had to go back to work. TTMF was so gracious to help with providing UBER gift cards for my 45 minute travel to and from the hospital to see our girls. During their NICU stay, we were checked on by both Elizabeth and Marisela and provided with resources, snack bags and sometimes just a simple hug. Fast forward to 32 weeks when one of my twins needed to be transferred to CCMC in Hartford. By this time thankfully, I purchased a car and TTMF transferred my UBER gift cards into gas cards so that I could afford the travel between home and the two hospitals every day.

I truly cannot thank TTMF enough, the support even after the NICU has been amazing. I am a working Mom so the calls and texts that I received from Marisela reminding me to slow down and stop for a minute were much needed. No one ever tells you how hard that last day in the NICU is, the day you go home. So many emotions are running through you. Elizabeth was there for our last morning in the NICU as we waited to be discharged and gave such encouraging words that made us confident in this next chapter. Donations of diapers and clothes awaited us at 39 weeks when we finally went home thanks to TTMF. We have even been to a workshop that talks about preemie care after the NICU, which are great ways to socialize amongst other preemie families. I am so blessed that my preemie twins are so loved! Now, my girls not only have a bunch of NICU & Antepartum family but a huge Tiny Miracles family as well.

TEE UP FORE PREEMIES AND GRAND SLAM FOR PREEMIES

A torrential rain storm in May did not deter the golfers and tennis players from supporting Tiny Miracles. Rescheduled for July 29th, the participants showed up at Aspetuck Valley Country Club for a full day on the course and courts. In spite of temperatures in the 90s, the enthusiasm of all was evident. Both old and new friends of Tiny Miracles mingled over lunch and dinner, and the atmosphere was festive. As noted by Board President, Marisela Esposito, the proceeds of the day translate into direct services, programs, and assistance for premature babies and their families.

Tiny Miracles is grateful to Broder & Orland, Mr. and Mrs. Lee Godina, Carmody Torrance Sandak Hennessey, DiNardo Enterprises, and Friends of Bridget who were major sponsors of the day. Joining them were numerous tee and contest sponsors.











Tennis participants
 Elliot Turner, Mark
 Czeterko, Benjamin Pomerantz, Liam Burke
 Godina, Mike Lombardo, Mike Lombardo Jr., Sal
 Sciarretta
 Aspetuck Valley golf course
 Jon
 Hoffman, Bill Thrush, Mike Godina, Paul Sullivan

FAMILY FUN DAY

Goats and chickens, balloons, live music, and good company – all part of a special day on June 2nd. Family Fun Day was a day of celebrating all those preemies and families whose lives have been touched by Tiny Miracles. Held at Cranbury Park in Norwalk, families with preemies of all ages were treated to a day of fun and festivities. Amongst the many activities, families came together to share their stories and children of all ages, who were once tiny babies. Families re-connected with TTMF mentors and exchanged how their lives had changed. New friends were made and previous relationships revitalized. It was a heart warming day filled with smiles, tears of joy, laughter, and making friendships which will last a lifetime.







Children and adults alike enjoyed the afternoon





ARTWORK BORN AHEAD OF ITS TIME



Carrie Cromwell-Hunt
 Moher family
 Elpida Tzilianos
 and Effie Antonelos
 Ponce family







Although an unexpected and heavy snowfall meant postponing the annual Artwork Born Ahead of its Time, the turnout and enthusiasm on November 30th was heart-warming. Held at the Weston Public Library, this mixed-media show attracted dozens of children, parents, and friends. With tiny foot and hand prints of preemies with the assistance of nurses in the NICU, to works by young children, teens, and adults, the evening was one of camaraderie and sharing. Parents and children mingled, shared their personal stories, and made new friends and relationships.

Artwork Born Ahead of its Time is an innovative event, in which the arts demonstrate the progress, perspectives, and visions of those born prematurely, regardless of their current age. Colorful and engaging works, presented in an engaging environment, underscored the special journeys of the participants. We are pleased to note that this year's event will be hosted by Union Savings Bank in Danbury on Tuesday, November 19th. Join us for a joyous experience.

IN JUST ONE YEAR

The Tiny Miracles Foundation is evidenced by its continual expansion and enrichment of services, programs, and assistance to the many premature babies and families in our communities. This may be seen in TTMF's accomplishments in just one year.

• Approximately 350 families were provided with personal support by TTMF volunteer Mentors, who spent nearly 500 in-hospital hours in one-toone bedside support

• 70 families received much-needed financial assistance

• 500 blankets, welcome, and home care bags were provided to parents with a preemie in the NICU • 175 special gifts were provided to families celebrating the Holidays while their baby was in the NICU

• Volunteers from such organizations as Union Savings Bank, Right Capital, Middlesex Middle School, and Temple B'nai Israel personalized blankets for our preemies

• 3 informative, participatory sessions of particular interest to parents of preemies were presented as part of the After the NICU Lecture & Dinner Series

• Bi-Weekly playgroups enabled parents of young children to participate in support groups

• A Professional Lead Parent Mentor joined the TTMF team who visits our

partner hospitals on a regular schedule
Mentor training sessions provided expert guidance addressing critical emotional challenges faced by parents

• Parent Connection/Support Groups were facilitated by the Director of Family Services to assist families with a preemie in addressing issues of concern

• Through Family Fun Day, Art Ahead of its Time, and social media, TTMF brought together hundreds of parents enabling them to establish long-term networks and to become further involved in TTMF support services

• 1st Birthday cards and gifts were sent to families, celebrating this important milestone.

HAPPY 1ST BIRTHDAY!



Brennan born 30 weeks



Logan & Liam born 28 weeks



Isabella born 33 weeks



Emma born 28 weeks



Victor born 35 weeks



Emerson born 34 weeks



Legend born 26 weeks



Barton & Mabel born 28 weeks

A TRIBUTE TO DR. VISCARELLO

r. Viscarello's credentials and professional history is without equal. His achievements and honors are far too many to enumerate. Suffice it to say, that he is among the foremost in his field of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Maternal-Fetal Medicine. His passion for his work and commitment to families extends way beyond the delivery room. Our Board Vice President, Ashley Dineen, shared her personal story with the audience. In the early hours of the morning two days after birth, one of her twin daughters was transported to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital due to life-threatening complications. The following morning (very early for the night owl) the first person to arrive by her bedside was Dr. Viscarello. He was there not only to offer support but with determination to help solve the mysterv behind her daughter's complications. She added humor with emotion sharing that she still has not forgotten the 20 additional vials of blood he ordered to run tests! As Ashley spoke, there were tears in the eyes of many, who share similar experiences with this one-of-a-kind physician!



BLANKETS FOR PREEMIES

TTMF provides blankets/ isolette covers to all preemies in the NICU. They shield these fragile preemies from harsh lights and sounds. Of equal importance, these individualized blankets enable parents to readily identify their preemie's isolette. These one-of-kind blankets are made possible by the many volunteers who give generously of their time in creating them.

TTMF wishes to publicly recognize and thank Middlesex Middle School, Union Savings Bank, Congregation B'nai Israel, Right Capital, Oracle, and several individuals and girl scout troops who gave so generously of their time. These photos tell the story:



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Every mentor that has stopped by has given us strength. Knowing we do not stand alone through this experience means so much. We're blessed to have met such great individuals that make us feel like family. –MOM OF 29 WEEKER

Thank you for always supporting our families. You do a great service for us and them! –NICU NURSE FROM ST. VINCENT'S MEDICAL CENTER

We want to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts. My son is enjoying all the equipment sent to us. He is blessed to have so many people that care for him. –MOM OF 28 WEEKER



A special **THANK YOU**

to all our volunteers, friends, mentors, donors, and board. They make all that we do possible. A gift may be made by visiting us at www.TTMF.org.



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