

the
tiny
miracles®
FOUNDATION

NEWSLETTER | FALL 2020

I am a tiny miracle.
www.tmf.org

SERVING THE
SMALLEST
MEMBERS
OF OUR
COMMUNITY

DIRECTOR'S LETTER

All those who know me, know my passion for music. These past months and the extraordinary resiliency of The Tiny Miracles Foundation (TTMF), bring to mind the lyrics of one of my favorites — George Harrison. His words seem quite poignant at this time: "... it's been a long cold lonely winter — it feels like years since it's been here. Here comes the sun, and I say it's alright." This truly captures the spirit, dedication, and commitment of all associated with TTMF during these many challenging months.

Faced with the realities of Covid 19, TTMF did not hesitate to bring the sun to the many families and preemies whom we have the privilege to serve. Of course, this required a creative approach. Staff, Board Members, Mentors, and friends refused to let the current crisis deter us. Together we put together a plan that met (and often exceeded) the needs of the many who rely on TTMF during their times of personal, emotional, financial, and family challenges. To the credit of the entire Tiny Miracles family this was done seamlessly.

Mentors connected with NICU families through virtual meetings, text messages, phone calls, and we remained in close contact with the nursing, medical, and social work staff. Means of contact were shared with all and i-pads were also provided to some hospital NICUs. Like so many others, we learned how to "Zoom". Support groups, educational series, and playgroup events continued using this resource. Although deliveries required special screenings and arrangements,



George Colabella has been the Executive Director of TTMF since 2014

Thank you so much. I can't explain what this means to our family. Your foundation has made this experience my family is going through so much easier. My wife and I look forward to being a part of the Tiny Miracles Foundation for years to come and we look forward to the day that we can give back!

—DAD OF 27 WEEKER

Blankets, Welcome and Home Care Bags continued to be provided to all hospitals, and all Family Resource Rooms remained amply stocked.

As Covid 19 extended its reach, Tiny Miracles increased its Financial Assistance Program significantly. With families losing work and paychecks, the needs for this special support grew at a never before seen pace. Yet, without hesitation, Tiny Miracles accepted our unique role in aiding families in crisis to provide a safe and secure home for their infant.

Behind the scenes is the office staff who make it possible for Tiny Miracles to continue to be the premier organization of its kind. Without hesitation, all agreed to a staggered schedule alternating between days in the office and working remotely. They never missed a beat, kept us moving forward, and displayed considerable concern and care for all we serve and for one another.

Tiny Miracles has not just survived, it has thrived. Yes, we may be meeting remotely, we may be wearing face masks, and we may be seeing one another only on Zoom. Although we have maintained social distancing we have not experienced emotional distancing.

And now, I must close with another poignant lyric from George Harrison: "Darkness only stays the night time, In the morning it will fade away, Daylight is good at arriving at the right time."

I salute all of the Tiny Miracles family in making sure that daylight has arrived!

George Colabella
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This year was not only a challenging one across the world, but our newer families of preemies were affected even more with added fears for the outcome of their tiny babies and stresses with new hospital visitation guidelines.

As I approach the end of my 2nd and last term as Board President, I can't be prouder of being a part of TTMF. Our Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers came together during very challenging times to help shift our programs to virtual platforms allowing for quick implementation of new ways of connect-



Board president, Marisela Esposito, with her tiny miracle Dante, now 17-years-old, born at 25.3 weeks and 1.15 lbs.

ing and supporting families and our hospital partners.

Our volunteers are crucial to support our mission and we are thankful for the 8 years PJ Marcella served on the Board. PJ was a key part and visionary of many of our Galas and a leader in bringing awareness for TTMF in the New Canaan community. PJ remains a big part of our organization.

In January, Ashley Dineen, current VP and Board Member since TTMF's inception, will take on the role of Board President. Ashley has been involved with many Galas and has helped bring our social media to a higher level. Stay tuned for more Executive Committee changes under whose leadership I have faith our mission will reach more families.

I plan to remain on the Board and continue to build upon the important work TTMF does in our community. The growth of TTMF continues to be a collective effort by our dedicated Board Members, volunteers, donors, and staff. Thank you for believing in the work we do.

Marisela Esposito
PRESIDENT

LEADERSHIP

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The Tiny Miracles Foundation is amazing. Knowing that I have a lot more support from moms who know what I'm going through helps, I didn't feel like I was alone. I am truly thankful for all of the Tiny Miracles team!

—MOM OF 34 WEEKER

ADJUSTMENT TO COVID-19

As Covid-19 became widespread and necessitated everyone taking precautions and adjusting to the challenge, The Tiny Miracles Foundation put into place a plan which would enable us to continue to respond to the needs of the preemie community. We were quickly faced with the fact that our partner hospitals would no longer allow our volunteer mentors to visit with parents.

With numerous working class families losing their employment, the number of Financial Assistance requests sky-rocketed. Support groups in the hospitals could not continue. Playgroups were no longer feasible. Home care and welcome bags for families were quickly dwindling. Stocking of TTMF Resource Rooms were in danger. Maintaining all the administrative necessities were in question.

Acutely aware of the now even greater challenges faced by parents, the TTMF team went into action.

With feedback from mentors, Board Members, and staff, a comprehensive plan was put into place. Unwilling to abandon our core mission, the following activities were executed.

- Mentors connected to parents via virtual meetings, phone calls, and social media
- Hospitals were provided with detailed contact manuals to facilitate the connection between parents, mentors, and TTMF staff
- I-pads were provided to some NICUs so that Covid positive parents could see their preemies and interact with NICU staff
- Virtual meetings were established to maintain in-hospital support groups
- Playgroups were initially held virtually, and with warmer weather moved outside
- The Financial Assistance Program significantly increased its budget
- Arrangements were made with

each hospital for the delivery of welcome and home care bags, reflective of protocols

- Family Resource rooms had supplies delivered and meals were sent to the nursing staffs
- Training and educational programs were conducted via Zoom
- Through a system of staggered and rotating days, the administrative offices remained open
- When not in the office, staff worked remotely
- Weekly virtual staff and management meetings were initiated to address any issues and to implement creative ways of continuing our full line of services, programs, and assistance

TTMF continues to provide hope, support, and assistance even during these uncertain times. As long as there are parents and preemies facing life-altering challenges, The Tiny Miracles Foundation will be there.

GALA 2019

November 2, 2019, brought hundreds of Tiny Miracles supporters and friends to the Wee Burn Country Club for an evening of celebration. With a theme of *Miracles in Monte Carlo*, guests were transported to the game rooms of a first class "casino".

Over dinner, guests viewed an uplifting video of parents speaking about their personal journey and all that Tiny Miracles meant to them. This was greeted with particular enthusiasm. Also that evening, TTMF honored Dr. Richard Freedman, Pediatrician/Neonatologist, for his 30 plus years of service to the community.

Following the formal presentation, guests entered the "casino" to try their hand at numerous games of chance. Guests did not receive financial rewards, but rather their "winnings" served as donations to The Tiny Miracles Foundation.



1 Ashley Dineen and Robin Black
 2 Wendy and Frank Piazza
 3 Heather and Liam Burke
 4 Friends of Broder & Orland
 5 Event Co-chairs: Greg McLaughlin, Michael Ruehlman, Gregg Wysocki

PHOTOS THIS PAGE BY ANDREA CERASO PHOTOGRAPHY

"What may seem small, meant a lot to us. Thank you Tiny Miracles for all you did for our family, and all you continue to do for other preemie families. You, are a miracle to us!"

—MOM OF 30 WEEKER



PLAYGROUP

Moms and their preemies met up at McGuane Park in Darien this summer for Playtime with Preemies.

HOSPITAL STAFF

The NICU staffs of our Partner Hospitals enjoy meals and treats sent by TTMF throughout the year.



GUEST HONOREE, DR. RICHARD FREEDMAN

Richard Freedman, M.D. received his undergraduate degree from Yale University and his M.D. from Boston University School of Medicine. He trained at Yale New Haven Hospital in pediatrics where he completed a fellowship in neonatology. Dr. Freedman joined a pediatric practice and was in attendance at Bridgeport Hospital for 35 years. Today he continues to practice at Pediatric Healthcare Associates with expertly trained and dedicated pediatricians who support his involvement in the newborn ICU.

Dr. Freedman continues to touch the lives of many. His care extends beyond the exam room as he takes

a personal interest in his patients. He has a singular ability to play multiple roles as physician, friend, and cheerleader for each of his patients and families. Dr. Freedman earns the trust and respect of his patients and caregivers in such a way that he becomes their friend and advocate for their medical, social, and development needs. It is his unique combination of expertise and compassion that Tiny Miracles honors Dr. Richard Freedman.



DR. RICHARD FREEDMAN

MIRACLE STORY: THE GONZALES FAMILY

ENGLISH

First, I thank God for his blessings and many people for their help and kindness to my family, I have no words to thank them for all that they did for us.

My whole family was sick with Coronavirus and my wife, Zully, the worst, was admitted and had our son premature and she was put in a medicated coma for a few weeks.

Ms. Marisela helped me through the foundation with her support and concern for our health. Newly moved into our apartment we didn't have much. She

"I have no words to thank them for all that they did for us."

brought us furniture, food, and clothes so we could have a clean outfit every day while I and stepson recovered. And the foundation helped us with paying rent and connecting us with another foundation for more support.

May god bless and protect you always.



ESPAÑOL

En primer lugar le doy gracias a Dios por sus bendiciones y a muchas personas por sus ayudas y bondad que tuvieron con mi familia, no tengo ni palabras para agradecerles por todo lo que hicieron por nosotros.

Toda mi familia estábamos enfermos con Coronavirus y mi esposa, Zully, la más peor, la ingresaron y tuvo nuestro niño prematuro y a ella la pusieron en coma medicada for unas semanas.

La Sra Marisela me ayudó a través de la fundación con su apoyo y preocupación de nuestra salud. Recién mudados a nuestro apartamento no teníamos mucho. Ella nos trajo muebles, comida y ropa para poder tener una muda limpia todos los días mientras yo y hijastro nos recuperamos. Y la fundación nos ayudo con el pago de renta y conexión con otra fundación para más apoyo.

Dios me los bendiga y proteja siempre.

Marvin, Zully, Junior and preemie Neysel enjoying life at home after gaining national attention when all family members were diagnosed with COVID. TTMF provided emotional and financial support while a Stamford teacher, Luciana Lira, cared for the new baby.

DISTANCED DANCING WITH MIKELA

Distanced Dancing with Mikela is a program started by Westhill High School seniors Mikela Pirri and Talia Kunin. Their mission was to raise money to benefit The Tiny Miracles Foundation (TTMF) and provide low-cost dance classes to dancers unable to train due to Covid-19. The girls were inspired to benefit TTMF as Talia, the Financial Coordinator of Distanced Dancing, has a brother who was one of the original Tiny Miracles. TTMF aided the Kunin family through their journey in the NICU. Mikela taught Hip Hop over zoom for many weeks this summer and raised awareness for TTMF. All in all, Mikela and Talia were grateful to work with TTMF and are thrilled with the results of this project.



Mikela and Talia

"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

MIRACLES COMMITTEE

Special thanks to The Weston Women's League whose *We Believe in Miracles* fundraiser benefitted The Tiny Miracles Foundation. Despite the pandemic, the committee created an innovative approach to donate directly to TTMF for items in need. Thank you to the members and their families who raised \$4,500.

from left to right: Veronica Lancin, Livia Berardinelli Ruggiero, Christina Seeber, Koren Kross



LOGO ONESIES

TINY MIRACLES, WEARING THE TTMF ONESIE, RECEIVED UPON THEIR HOSPITAL DISCHARGE



THE TINY MIRACLES FOUNDATION WELCOMES KRISTEN EZZO AS DIRECTOR OF FAMILY SERVICES

Kristen Ezzo became the newest member of the Tiny Miracles Foundation on April 6. Kristen is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. She received her B.A. from the University of New Haven, and her Masters from Southern Connecticut State University. Kristen comes to us with an extensive background as a therapist, having previously been associated with several Connecticut mental health organizations.

Although Kristen joined Tiny Miracles in the midst of the Covid outbreak, she immediately set about the many tasks of the position. In the few months



that she has been with us, Kristen has taken the reins and has accomplished much. She has formed relationships with all our mentors and with hospital staff, she has organized and presented several educational on-line seminars, re-organized support groups, and has successfully translated existing programs into on-line resources in response to Covid-19.

Kristen has become a welcome member of the Tiny Miracles family and we all look forward to a long and on-going relationship with her. Kristen resides with her husband and son in New Haven County.

ARTWORK BORN AHEAD OF ITS TIME



In keeping with the annual tradition of displaying art work by preemies, TTMF held its opening exhibit at Union Savings Bank in Danbury. Works of art included footprints of preemies, along with works by children and adults who were born prematurely. Held on November 19, 2019, this unique exhibit coincided with National Prematurity Month. Well-attended by parents and friends from throughout the area, the evening was an opportunity for parents to connect. **Special thanks go to Union Savings Bank. USB is both a supporter and friend of TTMF. Displayed in the main reception area, the exhibit was thus open to be seen by the community.**

1 29 weeker Caleb with mom Claudia & friend
 2 35 weeker Kane and dad 3 34 weeker Thomas
 4 25 weeker twins Nicky and Alex with their Grandma, Lee 5 Dina Pereira, Marisela Esposito, Michele Bonvicini, and Union Savings Bank CEO, Cynthia Merkle

HAPPY 1ST BIRTHDAY!

THESE TINY MIRACLES TURNED ONE YEAR OLD THIS YEAR!



Audrey, 27 weeks



Cassien, 34 weeks



Jace, 30 weeks



Jada & Kali, 27 weeks



Jalen, 27 weeks



Khepri, 26 weeks



Liam, 33 weeks



Logan, 33 weeks



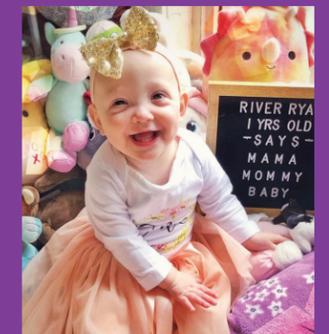
Mateo, 26 weeks



Nolan, 30 weeks



Oliver & Elliot, 33 weeks



River, 32 weeks



Sofia, 35 weeks



Sutton & Charlotte, 31 weeks



Tyler, 31 weeks



Zuri, 29 weeks



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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
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Olivia Boccamazzo
The Bridgeport NICU
Griffin and Shepard Burke
Marcella Campagnolo
Xavier and Jackson Cavaliere
Kelley Chapman
DeShay Family
Reagan Donegan
Ava Duscio
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Dante Esposito
Braden Franchi
Zoe and Thiago Garcia-Berg

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IN MEMORY OF
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Godfred Etse, Jr.
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Aylin Golembesky
Henry J. and Erna D. Leir
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To share and give back to those in need...
it feels full circle.*

—BEDREST SUPPORT MENTOR

*The time I give to TTMF and
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*I am so incredibly grateful to TTMF
for all their support. I was completely unprepared,
and in the middle of a pandemic!*

*TTMF helped me get organized and get some
much-needed essentials so that both me and my
daughter felt loved and well-cared for. Thank you
to the whole team for all that they do!*

—MOM OF 34 WEEKER AT BRIDGEPORT HOSPITAL

*After having my son at only 27 weeks,
The Tiny Miracles Foundation was there to help
me through this challenging time in my life.
It means so much especially during this pandemic
that there are genuine people out here willing to*

*help. I cannot say thank you enough
to the entire Tiny Miracles Foundation
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