

PREEMIES TODAY

Families Helping Families

PREEMIE OF THE MONTH:

This month's preemie is Michael Wu. He may have started as a micro preemie, but there is nothing "micro" about those cheeks! Here is his story as told by his mom, Tara.

Our son, Michael Richard Thomas Wu, made his unexpected early arrival on September 22, 2005, at 26 weeks, 5 days gestation and weighing 2 lb. 7 oz. Little Michael was supposed to be a Christmas baby, but Christmas came early that year. I had enjoyed a storybook pregnancy with my first child, who was two when Michael was born. However, one day during my sixth month of carrying Michael, I started having contractions. My OB said I should go to the hospital just in case. After waiting while they took several others who looked more "pregnant" and in need of urgent care than I did, I was escorted to the examination area, where I started bleeding. Although my contractions were not strong, upon examination, my doctor could see the baby's head. Immediately I was given medications to stop the contractions and to develop the baby's lungs in the event of an early delivery.

I was in denial, thinking that the contractions would stop and I'd be able to go home, until they wheeled me into a labor and delivery room. I had never been so terrified in my life. I was given magnesium sulfate and told that they'd do their best to delay delivery until I could get the second betamethasone shot for the baby's lungs. About 12 hours later, Baby Michael was delivered by emergency C-section. He didn't cry, but he was breathing and the doctors marveled at how "big" he seemed for his age. My husband and I were relieved that things seemed to be under control.

Our honeymoon period was short-lived after our son's neonatologist described all of the things that had to be done for Michael. He was on a ventilator then later the C-Pap; he had a PDA; he needed blood transfusions; we had to sign a consent to put in a central line to feed Michael and give him his various medicines. Michael was dubbed the "apnea king" by his nurses because he was having so many spells. It was overwhelming and we agonized that our precious little boy was so vulnerable and had to suffer like this in his first few days of

life. Michael's early NICU pictures were scary. He had tubes and wires everywhere, and he looked like a little red spaceman with his bilirubin mask, C-Pap hood and arms and legs in splints to hold in his IVs. The worst part is that because Michael was in pain, we were reluctant to hold or even touch him and risk making it worse.

Day by day Michael's condition improved. He was weaned to supplemental oxygen and taken off the bilirubin lights, his PDA had closed and eventually he started to receive tube feedings of my milk. When he was about 29 weeks old, we were able to hold him outside of the isolette for the first time. He was bundled in two blankets and had the tiniest little face and hands I had ever seen. Michael was very

alert and, except for the tubes and wires, he seemed like just a small version of a healthy full term baby. I was surprised that at such a young age he could suck on his pacifier and even pull out his nasal canula. Michael steadily gained weight and at around 32 weeks graduated to a big boy crib and bottle feedings. Unfortunately he aspirated his milk, which led to more reflux and apnea problems, so we had to thicken his feedings. This meant I could not nurse Michael until he could tolerate thin milk.

Michael was discharged from the NICU in early December 2005, three weeks before his due date. He weighed almost six pounds and was on an apnea monitor. He was wide-eyed during the car ride and took in all of the sights and sounds of his new home.

When I look back at the photos of us wearing special robes and masks to hold

Michael during his first weeks at home it seems like overkill, but he didn't need to be hospitalized at all that winter (except for a minor hernia repair surgery). Michael required more care than a full term baby. Given his small size, we had to feed Michael often, administer his medications and see the doctor several times per week. Michael stayed small until his pulmonologist gave me the green light to start nursing in March 2006 and to reduce the thickness of his bottle feedings. In the span of one month Michael gained about six pounds and just became a happier, healthier baby. We did have some set backs in July and August when Michael went into wheezing



Michael at 8 months old

Preemies Today Annual Report for 2006

2006 was a year of expansion and change for Preemies Today! We bid farewell to Kathy Paz-Mingledorff, our founder and President. Kathy left the Board to pursue other personal activities. Kathy remains involved in our programs and we continue to miss her on the Board!

The Preemies Today Board and volunteers were very busy in 2006 and we would like to share some of our achievements with you:

Programs

Under the watchful eye of our Editor-in-Chief, Deborah Leaf, we distributed over 5,000 copies of our monthly Newsletter in English and 921 quarterly Newsletters in Spanish! In addition to our Members and many other health professionals, eleven local NICU's now receive copies of the Newsletter, which they make available at their locations!

Have you visited our website lately? Julie Kipers, Board Secretary and webmaster extraordinaire, has 'led the pack' with our newly upgraded website. The information included is expansive and it's easy to navigate. Enhancements include: on-line registration to join Preemies Today and subscribe to our Newsletter; calendar of local events; resource list that includes local doctors, therapists and so much more; summary of current programs; tips page; even a page 'for kids!' Please spend some time surfing our web-site, We know you'll be impressed!

We are particularly excited with the launch of our Premie Care Kits, which is a care package given to parents in the NICU. These kits currently contain a Halo sleep sack, baby blanket, Preemies Today magnet and local resource information. Kits are currently distributed to NICU's at Fair Oaks and Reston hospitals. Kathy Paz-Mingledorff and Christine Miller were instrumental in launching this Program and we thank them for their hard work and dedication! We have received positive feedback from nurses and families and will be expanding this Program in 2007.

Our Annual Celebration was a great success! In 2006 we launched our 'Healthcare Professional of the Year' Award and recognized two of our favorites, Lynn Kuba and Donna Reed. The children were entertained by the Great Zucchini while the adults bid on our many Silent Auction items, which raised over \$6,500.

Stephanie Miller is our Membership Chair and has done a tremendous job of expanding our Membership! Stephanie is happy to speak with any Member and explain our current programs, or just try to help. Stephanie is also available at our monthly support group meetings that are held in the Fair Lakes area.

Giving

Twenty percent of the proceeds from our Annual Celebration and Silent Auction were donated to the New Orleans Children's hospital. The hospital was damaged during Hurricane Katrina and they were in much need of funds. The hospital used our donation to purchase a washer and dryer for the NICU families and staff.

In the summer, we held a Children's Book Drive and, thanks to your generosity, were able to donate over 100 children's books in Spanish and English to 11 local NICU's. The books will be available in the waiting areas.

Our White House Ornament sale went beyond our expectations! We raised \$400 and were able to purchase 150 'My Tiny Hands' signs. These signs can be attached to most infant car seats and strollers and say 'please wash your hands before touching mine.' The purchase was greatly helped by a generous discount from www.MyTinyHands.com. These signs will be distributed to the local area NICU's.

The Preemies Today team was thrilled to contribute a little over \$32,000 for the March of Dimes 2006 WalkAmerica Campaign. Further, we received an Award for reaching 8th place in the Northern Virginia area under the Giving Category. Our 2007 WalkAmerica fund raising is

already under-way and with your help, we aim to be placed higher this year!

Grants and Sponsors

The local chapter of the March of Dimes continues to support Preemies Today in many ways. In 2006 we were awarded a grant of \$7,825 to support our Newsletters, website redesign, publication of educational brochures and tote bags for our Care Kits.

We also received funds from employees of ExxonMobil, Fairfax Inova and United Way, who chose to give to Preemies Today via their employee favorite charities campaign.

Finally, we would also like to give special thanks to the many sponsors, both individual and corporate, who supported us in 2006!

We would like to thank the current Board of Preemies Today; Susan Boucher, Heather Ablondi, Ashley Hall, Stephanie Miller, Julie Kipers and Deborah Leaf for their continued dedication in support of our cause!

2007

This year is already off to an amazing start!

In January we were awarded a \$15,000 grant by the local chapter of March of Dimes to support our programs. Further, the ExxonMobil employee charity campaign raised \$5,500 from employee contributions!

Our expansion plans include an eight page Newsletter in English, Premie Care Kits to Georgetown Hospital in the third quarter and expansion of our monthly support group.

We're going to have a busy year and always welcome volunteers to help with our programs. Should you be interested in helping please contact us at info@preemiestoday.com.

Thank you!

Elaine Noto,
Chairman of the Board, Preemies Today

Mary Beth Hazelgrove
President, Preemies Today

Local News:

Announcements:

Valentine's Day Party

Preemies Today will be hosting a Valentine's Day party with crafts, food and fun! Please bring a snack to share. Preemies Today will provide drinks and paper goods.

Date: Saturday, February 10

Time: 1pm-3:30pm.

Place: Reston Library, Room 1

11925 Bowman Towne Dr, Reston, 20190

RSVP julie.kipers@preemiestoday.com

Preemies Today Golf Tournament

Preemies Today is thrilled to announce that they will be joining Team Katelyn in the 2nd Annual Team Katelyn Golf Tournament on April 4th, 2007 at Lansdowne Golf Club in Lansdowne, VA. Last year's golf tournament raised \$16,000 for the March of Dimes Walk America Campaign. This year Preemies Today and Team Katelyn hope to exceed this total. All proceeds will go to March of Dimes Walk America 2007 and to Preemies Today to help support its programs such as the telephone-support line, support groups, and the Premie Care Package Program. To participate in the golf tournament, assist with sponsorship or silent auction donations you can sign-up online at the golf tournament's website at www.katelynsjourney.com. Auction items such as sports tickets, sports paraphernalia, restaurant gift cards, wine, and spa packages would be greatly appreciated.

continued from cover, Michael story

spells that we could not stop without going to the hospital for supplemental oxygen and nebulizer treatments. Michael continues to get home neb treatments every day and takes medication to prevent reflux, which has worked like a charm in keeping him out of the hospital.

At 16 months old (13 months adjusted), Michael weighs over 28 pounds! He is all smiles and runs around, babbles songs and is starting to talk. It is heart-

warming to see how his big sister adores him and he looks up to her – a far cry from when Michael was in the NICU and they couldn't even see each other. Michael is getting to socialize more now that he is stronger, and he loves the playground and playing with other babies.

Michael has had a huge impact on our family and we can't imagine what life would be like without him. Each day we are

Support Groups:

"A Friend to Talk to"

Our "Friend to Talk to" support line is up and running. Please feel free to give us a call and one of our preemie parent volunteers can offer you some much needed support. The support line telephone number is 703-552-0163, or toll free number at 1-888-712-3208.

Take a Break

Preemies Today offers meal preparation assistance and additional support for preemie families in crisis. If you are in need of assistance or would like to volunteer to help others, please contact Susan at susan.boucher@star-power.net.

Local Support Groups

Local support groups are going strong! On every 2nd Wednesday at 7:30 pm we hold our local support group meetings at the Barnes and Noble, Fair Lakes. For more information email Deborah at deborah_leaf@yahoo.com.

Yahoogroup!

Come and join our yahoogroup and meet some of our wonderful parents where you can exchange information on preemie parenting. You can subscribe at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PreemiesToday/>

reminded of how lucky we are to have had the fine doctors and nurses at INOVA Fairfax Hospital take care of us during those early months, and Michael's pulmonologists to keep us on track for a healthy future. It was a challenge to get through the unknowns of the early months, but new preemie parents should take heart in our story and know that your baby's health and your life will get better over time.

Helpful Resources:

Prince William County Social

Services:

www.co.prince-william.va.us/csb/programsandservices/

Fairfax County Department of Family

Services:

(703) 324-7500

www.co.fairfax.va.us/services/dfs/

Social Security Administration:

1-800-772-1213

www.ssa.org

SIDS Mid-Atlantic

(703) 933-9100

www.sidsma.org

March of Dimes

1-800-326-BABY

www.marchofdimes.com

Sidelines National Support

1-888-447-4754

www.sidelines.org

Early Intervention/ Infant Toddler Connection

Fairfax County- (703) 246-7121

Alexandria- (703) 838-5060

Prince William- (703) 792-7879

Arlington County- (703) 228-1630

Loudoun County- (703)-777-0561

Washington DC- (202)727-8300

Montgomery County- (240) 777-3997

Prince George's County-(301) 265-

8415

WIC

Manassas- (703) 792-4703

Woodbridge- (703) 792-7319

Springfield (703) 569-1031

Mount Vernon (703) 660-7100

Fairfax- (703) 246-7100

For a list of online resources please go to:

www.PreemiesToday.org

Mission of Preemies Today:

Preemies Today is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to reach out and provide support to families of infants born prematurely beginning at birth and throughout childhood.

Vision: We will reduce the stress of caring for a child born prematurely by creating a network of families who offer help, comfort, and understanding to one another.

Values: We strive to promote compassion, inclusiveness, understanding and patience.

Membership/Subscription Information:

We offer the Premies Today newsletter, family outings, parent support groups, preemie playgroups, and "A Friend to Talk To," our call-in line for parents and families of preemies. Membership in our organization is free.

For a free subscription to our newsletter and to join Premies Today please email us at info@premiestoday.org or you may go to our website at www.PremiesToday.org and click on "Join us."

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PREEMIES
TODAY

*P.O. Box 523525
Springfield, VA 22152*

Do you need to talk to someone who understands the preemie experience? If so, call the "Friend to Talk to" line at **1-888-712-3208**