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MEDIA ALERT

November 4, 2010

Preemie Power Celebrates the Strength of Tiniest Central Texans *Hand to Hold Invites NICU Graduates and Families to Community-Wide Celebration; Announces Photo Contest Winners*

WHAT: In recognition of November as Prematurity Awareness Month, Hand to Hold, a local nonprofit that supports parents of preemies, is hosting Central Texas' first, community-wide NICU celebration "Preemie Power" for all NICU graduates and their families on Sunday, November 14, 2010. The free event is open to the public and will include a super hero theme, bouncy houses, carnival games, music, crafts and birthday cake. Local neonatologist and former preemie Dr. John Loyd will serve as the "Master of Preemies" and have the honor of announcing the winners of the Preemie Power Photo and Essay Contest.

Preemie Power kicked off in October as Central Texas parents were encouraged to submit pictures and essays for the Preemie Power Online Photo and Essay Contest. More than 60 families submitted photos and stories about the accomplishments and milestones of their amazing "super hero" child. Public voting which began November 1, 2010, logged 1,300 online votes on the first day. Photo contest submissions receiving the most number of votes by November 10, will then be voted on by celebrity judges who will determine the winners in three age categories (0-1 year, 1+ year to 5 years, and 6 years and older). Confirmed local celebrity judges include Melissa Gale of KVUE News, Kim Pleticha of *Parent:Wise Austin*; Stephanie Klein, bestselling author, mother, and internationally celebrated blogger; and Dr. John Loyd.

Winners will receive local recognition, super hero cape and a prize packages valued at more than \$400 from local supporters including Baby Bugaloo, Babyearth.com, Brilliant Sky Toys & Books, Brooke West Photography and Mellow Johnny's Bike Shop.

WHY: In Travis County, 2,000 babies, nearly 6 each day, are born too early (before 37 weeks gestation). In Texas, one in seven births is preterm. Premature birth is traumatic and a leading cause of permanent disability and death, yet many of these babies persevere...sometimes against all odds. They graduate from the NICU and with super hero-like strength and conviction defy the odds by reaching milestone after milestone.

This event raises awareness of November as Prematurity Awareness Month and celebrates the accomplishments of these NICU graduates, their families and the many medical providers who have supported their journey to health. The event also marks the first birthday of Hand to Hold, founded last fall to support families through and beyond the birth of a child born premature or who spent time in the NICU. Preemie Power is designed to turn a tragic and traumatic experience into one that is empowering and life-affirming. For families who may still have a child in the NICU and others who still may need support, this celebration inspires hope by sharing a community of support.

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Media Alert – Premie Power Family Celebration (continued)

- WHEN:** The Premie Power family celebration will be held on November 14, 2010, from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Winners of the online photo contest will be announced at the event.
- WHO:** Families are invited to bring their NICU graduate to the first-ever Central Texas NICU reunion and family celebration. Current and former neonatal physicians, nurses and other health care providers are invited to attend (in super hero costume if desired) to help celebrate these powerful preemies. Families will be able to reconnect with one another and find the unique fellowship of others who have shared similar journeys.
- In addition, the public is invited to view and vote for their favorite preemie or preemies in the Premie Power online photo and essay contest to learn more about premature birth and to express their support for these tiny super heroes. To read some of the amazing stories that were submitted, and cast a vote, visit <http://wildfireapp.com/website/6/contests/65899>
- WHERE:** The Premie Power family celebration will be held in the new gymnasium at Covenant Presbyterian Church located at 3003 Northland Dr., in Austin, Texas.
- CONTACT:** Read the latest about the event by visiting <http://www.handtohold.org/get-involved/donate/events/preemie-power/> or contact Kelli Kelley at kelli@handtohold.org.
- PHOTO OPP:** Children of all ages and abilities enjoying snacks and games with their parents and celebrating with the super-hero garbed doctors and nurses who cared for them before they graduated from the NICU.

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About Hand to Hold

Hand to Hold, a nonprofit organization, provides comprehensive resources and support programs to parents of preemies, babies born with special health care needs and those who have experienced a loss due to these or other complications. Based in Austin with plans to expand, Hand to Hold's core service is matching experienced parents of prematurity and loss with new parents who have had a child in the NICU for support. For more information, visit www.handtohold.org.