



HAND to HOLD
Fragile Babies. Strong Support.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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

AUSTIN, Texas (November 4, 2010) – 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 neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and with super hero-like strength and conviction defy the odds by reaching milestone after milestone.

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 family-friendly event which coincides with November as Prematurity Awareness Month will be held from 1:30 until 3 p.m. in the new gymnasium at Covenant Presbyterian Church located at 3003 Northland Dr., in Austin, Texas.

Local neonatologist Dr. John Loyd will serve as the "Master of Preemies" Dr. Loyd, a father of five, has first-hand knowledge of how much preemies accomplish. He was a preemie himself, born at 30 weeks gestation.

"Prematurity presents unique challenges both physically and developmentally that do not always end when the baby goes home," explains Dr. Loyd. "Even though prematurity can lead to life-long challenges, many of these resilient babies overcome and thrive! That's why it's so important to have a celebration like Preemie Power to recognize how much these tiny ones have accomplished and celebrate the super-human support their families provide along the way."

The Preemie Power event is free to all families and will include a super hero theme, bouncy houses, carnival games, music, crafts and plenty of birthday cake. 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. Current and former neonatal nurses and physicians from all area hospitals 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..



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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. To read some of the amazing stories that were submitted, and cast your vote, visit <http://wildfireapp.com/website/6/contests/65899>

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.

“Preemie Power is about turning a traumatic and tragic experience into something life-empowering and positive,” says Kelli Kelley, founder and Executive Director of Hand to Hold. “Hand to Hold is sharing a hopeful message for parents and families who are in the NICU with a child right now and for those who are well past those days. The Preemie Power contest and celebration tells these families and supporters that there is hope and light at the end of the tunnel.” Kelley is the mother of two children born preterm.

Hand to Hold is grateful to St. David's Foundation, St. David's Healthcare, Roger Beasley Mazda Auto Group and Sonic for underwriting the Preemie Power event. Read the latest about the event by visiting <http://www.handtohold.org/get-involved/donate/events/preemie-power/>

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 peer mentors with new parents who have had a child in the NICU to offer support. For more information, visit www.handtohold.org.

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