

Hand to Hold Announces 2013 Premie Power Contest Winners

AUSTIN, Texas (December 20, 2013) – Hand to Hold, a nonprofit that supports parents of preemies and babies who spend time in the neonatal intensive care unit, announced the winners of its fourth annual [Premie Power Photo and Essay Contest](#). The top winner, nine-month-old Ari Kinson, from Great Mills, Md., and who was born at 28 weeks gestation weighing 1 pound 2 ounces, was selected as this year's Premie of the Year Overall Winner. His family received the grand prize which included a Apple iPad 3G Retina Display.

The Contest brought together 185 families from 41 U.S. states and three countries including Canada, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The contest gave families an opportunity to share the heart-warming stories of their Neonatal Intensive Care Unit graduates and the milestones they have achieved.

In the United States, **nearly half a million babies, about eight each day, are born** too early (before 37 weeks gestation) and more are born who require specialized care in a NICU after birth for other medical reasons. Worldwide 15 million babies are born too soon each year. Premature birth, the most prevalent reason for a NICU stay, is traumatic and a leading cause of permanent disability and death, yet many of these babies beat the odds against them.

“We organized Premie Power to raise awareness not only of challenges of having a child in the NICU, but also the challenges so many of these children and families face during and after a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit stay,” said Kelli Kelley, founder and Executive Director of Hand to Hold and mother of two preemies. “These amazing little super heroes have overcome so much during their first days, weeks and months of life. They are resilient, amazing kids who have the ability to teach us all important life lessons about courage, strength and finding the joy in little things!”

Six-month-old Thomas Peters of Washington, Mich., near Detroit, received top honors in the 0 to 6 months age category. “Terrific Tommy” was born at 30 weeks gestation weighing 4 pounds 8 ounces and spent 38 days in the NICU. Finalists in the same category included eight-week-old Amelia Kennard, “Mighty 'Lil Miss,” of Princeton, Ind. and five-month-old Sofia Demisova, “Little Monkey

Sofia,” of Santa Monica, Calif.

Overall winner, Ari Kinson of Great Mills, Md., was chosen the winner in the 7 to 12 months age category. “Ari-tron” spent just shy of 5 months in the NICU. Finalists in the same category included 11-month-old Max Heron, “Miracle Max,” of Pittsburgh, Pa. and 11-month-old Bryson Savage, “Bryson the NICU Warrior,” of Marshall, N.C.

Two-year-old Ezra Pacheco of San Dimas, Calif. won recognition in the over 1 to 3 years age category. “Ezra the Jedi Padawan” was born at 25 weeks, weighed 2 pounds 3 ounces at birth and stayed in the NICU 76 days. Finalists in the same category included 23-month-old Austin Kimmey, “Awesome Austin” from Cincinnati, Ohio. and almost three-year-old twins Ella and Aiden Binkley, “Aiden and Ella - Undercover Super Heroes” from Newton, Pa.

Nyana Brackett, 3, of Burnaby, British Columbia in Canada was named the winner in the over 3 to 5 years age category. “Princess Smileyface of the Sunshine Brigade” was born at 26 weeks gestation weighing 2.2lbs (1110g) and spent 7 months in the NICU. Finalists in the same category included four-year-old Zion Brantley, “Mighty Munchy,” of Kenosha, Wis. and three-year-old Isaac Chavez, “Isaac the Incredible” of St. Johns, Ariz.

Hannah Beasley, 16, of Atlanta was chosen as the top winner in the age 5 years and over category. “Hope with Hannah,” a surviving twin, was born at 23 weeks gestation and weighed 17-1/2 ounces at birth. She spent 4 months in the NICU. Finalists in the same category included 11-year-old Nathaniel Pauleon, “Nate the Great,” of Atlanta and five-year-old Bronson Deets, “Super B” of Dallas.

Nine-month-old Ari Kinson, “Ari-tron,” was also recognized with the Thundering Thurston Award for earning the most votes – 805 in all. This award was named for Thurston Mossholder, an inaugural Premie Power winner from Round Rock, Texas who lost his battle against complications arising from his prematurity shortly after his first birthday in 2011.

The Staff Favorite award was presented to 11-year-old Nathaniel Pauleon, “Nate the Great,” of Atlanta. The Executive Director’s Pick was awarded to “Tiny-N-Tuff” twins Kastyn, 20 months, and the late Kenady McCaslin, forever 14 months old, of Shadypoint, Okla.

Judges for the contest included the finalist and winners of the recent [NICU Heroes Award](#), an award program that recognizes NICU health care professionals for their compassion and dedication to improving outcomes not only for medical fragile babies but the entire family. Judging Premie Power this year were Neonatologist Dr. Gerard Cleary of Binghamton Hospital in Binghamton, Pa.; Suzie Glass, NICU Nurse, Methodist Germantown, Memphis, Tenn.; Dr. John Loyd, neonatologist (retired), Seton Healthcare, Austin, Texas; Dr. Anthony Orsini, neonatologist, Atlantic Health, Morristown, N.J.; Amy Garrett, NICU Nurse, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, Ark.; and Dr. Jorge Rojas, neonatologist, Baptist Hospital, Nashville, Tenn.

Hand to Hold is grateful to its title sponsor Mead Johnson Nutrition, makers of Enfamil, and supporting corporate sponsors Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, St. David's Healthcare and GE Healthcare. Winners and finalists received Premie Power super hero capes and prize packages of varying values including prizes sponsored by Neotech Products and BABYBJÖRN.