



HAND to HOLD
Fragile Babies. Strong Support.

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Hand to Hold Announces Photo and Essay Contest Winners *Premie Power Shares Triumphs of Central Texas' Premies, Commemorates November as Prematurity Awareness Month*

AUSTIN, Texas (November 16, 2010) – Two hundred families, doctors and nurses turned out for Central Texas' first community-wide neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) reunion, Premie Power, on Sunday November 14, 2010. The family celebration that was organized by Hand to Hold, a local nonprofit that supports parents of premies, gave families and health care providers a venue to recognize and honor each child's journey to health as a part of November as Prematurity Awareness Month. In addition, children and adults wearing super hero costumes and capes enjoyed slides, bouncy houses, a cupcake walk, a balloon twister, crafts and super hero cake.

The highlight of the afternoon was the announcement of the winners of the Premie Power photo and essay contest. Seventy local families entered their child's photo in the contest and explained their child's super hero qualities. More than 13,000 votes were cast in the contest. The entries that received the most votes advanced as finalists, and local celebrity judges chose the final winners in three age categories (0-1 year, 1+ to 5 years and 6 years and older). Local celebrity judges included Melissa Gale of KVUE News, Kim Pleticha of *Parent: Wise Austin*; Stephanie Klein, bestselling author, mother, and internationally celebrated blogger.

Local neonatologist Dr. John Loyd served as Master of Premies. Loyd was nominated by a Hand to Hold volunteer family for special recognition for caring for their son who was born premature. Dr. Loyd, a premie himself born at 30 weeks gestation, accepted a super premie cape in honor of his accomplishments both as a physician and as a premie. He then announced the winners of the Premie Power Photo and Essay Contest.

Thurston Mossholder of Round Rock received top honors in the 0-1 year old category. "Thundering Thurston" was born at 27 weeks gestation weighing 1 pound 4 ounces. He is now 8 months old and currently receiving care in the NICU. He was nominated by his mother, Donna, who wrote: "Thurston has been the most extraordinary little super hero ever and the best teacher anyone could ever ask for. He has taught me and my family numerous lessons, and in true super hero fashion, has shapeshifted all of us, warming and changing our hearts forever."

Bryce Moline of Cedar Park was named the winner in the 1+ to 5 years old category. Nominated by his mother Katrina, "The Amazing Bryce-anator" was born at 24 weeks gestation weighing just 1 pound 8

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Hand to Hold Announces Winners, Cont.

ounces at birth and spent 150 days in the NICU. He is now 16 months old. His mother writes: “In Bryce’s short life he has overcome so much adversity. He has surpassed all expectations and continues to amaze not only us but his doctors and specialists...He is so much more than any medical condition. Bryce epitomizes strength, hope and a real zest for living life with a smile on his face.”

Kate Richmond of Austin was chosen as the top winner in the age 6 and over category. Nominated by her mother Aimee, “Kate the Great” was born at 31 weeks gestation, weighed 3 pounds at birth and spent 3 weeks in the NICU. Kate is one of six children. Her mother shares, “Kate has faced pretty much every challenge that has been thrown her way. On the night she was born, the doctors came to us and told us that she most likely wasn’t going to make it through the night...Kate astounded all of the doctors and nurses who all said they’d never seen a baby come back from where she had been...Her progress has been nothing short of spectacular.”

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. The challenges for babies and families do not end after the NICU, however, since many preemies face additional health care needs as they return to health.

“We organized Premie Power to give families an outlet to share about the incredible journey they have had with their child and rejoice in their child’s accomplishments,” says Kelli Kelley, founder and Executive Director of Hand to Hold. “Many of these families have faced the terrors of medical setbacks and even the threat of losing of their child, and yet, their child has survived. We want to recognize that these children really are super heroes as are the medical professionals who tirelessly cared for them.” Kelley is the mother of two children born preterm.

Winners received their very own Premie Power 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.

Premie Power celebrated Hand to Hold’s first anniversary of serving families in Central Texas who have had a preemie or a loss. It also coincided with November as prematurity awareness month. Hand to Hold is grateful to St. David’s Foundation, St. David’s Healthcare, Roger Beasley Mazda Auto Group, Women Partners in Health and Sonic for underwriting the Premie Power Contest and Family Celebration.

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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