

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NOVEMBER – PREMATURITY AWARENESS MONTH
PHILADELPHIA SENDS A MESSAGE OF HOPE FOR PREMATURE BABIES

KING OF PRUSSIA -- Babies are in crisis today. Nearly half a million are born prematurely every year and the number is rising. In Pennsylvania, the March of Dimes is organizing events to raise awareness as part of its national effort to save babies from premature birth by funding research to find the causes and by supporting local programs that offer hope and help to families with a baby in intensive care.

Premature birth is the number one cause of death in newborns and is a major cause of serious health problems. It costs society billions of dollars every year. Here in Pennsylvania, over 16,000 babies are born prematurely each year. That is why the March of Dimes has designated November as Prematurity Awareness Month - to send the alert that premature birth is a crisis in our country and to bring people together to help give all babies their 9 months.

◆On Prematurity Awareness Day®, November 15th, the Southeast Pennsylvania Division is holding a Day of Gratitude Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) tours at Thomas Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia to thank hospital personnel and educate various community and business leaders about the mission of the March of Dimes.

◆Beginning November 1st you can see various landmarks in Philadelphia swaddled in pink and blue lights to symbolize hope for the future of all babies.

Also in November, Motherhood Maternity, a national sponsor of Prematurity Awareness Month, will offer pregnant women free health information about how to have a healthy baby. All Motherhood Maternity shoppers are invited to support the Prematurity Campaign by making a donation and purchasing specially designated items and wristbands in stores.

The March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign has been endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses. *American Baby* magazine and Working Mother

Media are national media sponsors. More than 46 professional and consumer organizations have become Campaign alliance members, including the American Academy of Family Physicians, the American Hospital Association and the American Public Health Association.

The national Prematurity Campaign Sponsors are CIGNA and FedEx, and Prematurity Awareness Month Sponsors are First Response and Arm & Hammer Oral Care. In Pennsylvania Geisinger Health System is the Prematurity Campaign Partner. The March of Dimes is a national voluntary health agency whose mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. Founded in 1938, the March of Dimes funds programs of research, community services, education, and advocacy to save babies and in 2003 launched a campaign to address the increasing rate of premature birth. For more information, call (610)945-6050.
