



Perris Press Release

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March for Babies Raises Money for a Worthy Cause

About 2,000 people took to the streets April 28 to raise money to prevent premature birth and its related defects in the annual March of Dimes "March For Babies."

Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers served as emcee of the Riverside event, which individuals, family teams and corporate participants who marched to celebrate children who survived birth defects, remember those who died because of them and raise funds to prevent them from striking further newborns.

"We're here to save babies lives," Rogers said. "Prematurity is the leading cause of death for infants in their first month of life. We are grateful for the people who have come out to help us make sure that all babies are born full-term. We are here to celebrate our babies, our families and our victories. Together we will put an end to prematurity. Today we walk for stronger, healthier babies."

The march drew supporters from all over the Inland Area who came to take part in the six-mile walk that began and ended at Riverside City College.

Rogers was joined on stage by Perris Mayor Daryl Busch, dignitaries from Riverside County and the City of Riverside, Sheriff Stan Sniff, corporate sponsors and Kelly and Cameron Potter, the parents of 2012 child ambassadors Miley and Irelyn Potter of Moreno Valley.

The twins were born two months premature in 2008 and spent more than six weeks in a neo-natal intensive care unit before they were strong enough to return home.

"To say I was scared would be an understatement," said Kelly Potter, 33, as her husband, Cameron Potter, 36, looked on.

During that time, the twins suffered from breathing and feeding problems, bleeding in their brains and infections.



Walkers begin the course from Riverside City College as part of the March of Dimes annual "March for Babies."

Treatments developed through March of Dimes research helped them survive. Miley and Irelyn today are healthy four-year-olds who enjoy singing, dancing, playing with dolls and have started pre-school.

"We are so fortunate to represent the March of Dimes at this great event," Kelly Potter said.

About a dozen family members and friends of Aubreanna Witcher took part in the March for Babies to celebrate her survival from premature birth. Born three months premature, Aubreanna weighed just 1 pound-6-ounces. She spent nearly four months in the hospital before she was strong enough to return home.

Her mom, Teresa Lomeli, of Banning, and dad, Tarail Witcher, took part in the March for Babies. So did grand-dad Ron Lomeli.

"It's very important to recognize the struggles these kids go through," he said. "I call her our miracle baby."

Corporate sponsor Kmart received a special attaboy at this year's March for Babies. The company has raised more than \$100 million for March of Dimes research in the last 30 years. District manager Mark Johnson accepted a plaque on behalf of his company's continuing commitment to support March of Dimes.

"It's nice waking up in the morning and knowing that you're helping save babies," he said. "It's not only good for the March of Dimes, it's good for humanity."

Children who did not survive premature births also were remembered. Event organizers released doves as a reminder that 41 babies are born with birth defects each day and that 18 die.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch praised all the people who turned out to walk.

"This is a very, very important cause for very important people," he said. "I know you are going to have a great day. I thank each and every one of you personally for being out here."



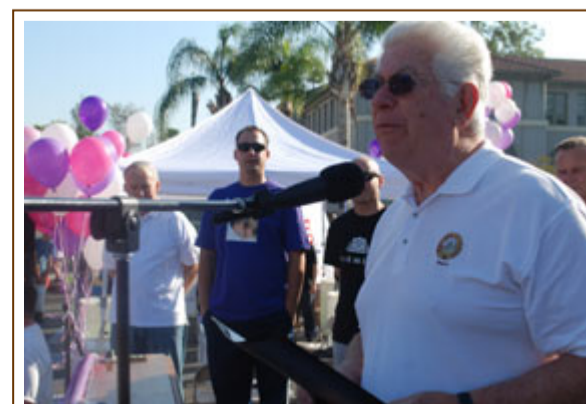
Kelly and Cameron Potter and their twins—Irelyn and Miley—served as ambassadors at the March for Babies April 28 in Riverside. Kelly Potter hold Irelyn while Cameron Potter holds Miley, who were born 10 weeks premature in 2008.



White doves were released as a reminder of the children whose lives were cut short by premature births and their related defects.



Perris City Councilwoman Rita Rogers, a March of Dimes division chair, with Riverside County Sheriff Stan Sniff. Rogers said: "Today we walk for stronger, healthier babies."



Perris Mayor Daryl Busch with a proclamation in support of the March for Babies—a "very, very important cause for very important people."