

Caley Halerz

2014 March of Dimes Ambassador
Altoona, Pennsylvania

Like many expectant parents, Denielle and Mark Halerz were excited about growing their family. But then their baby, Caley, was born 16 weeks early, weighing just 1 pound, 2 ounces. She was considered a micro-preemie and was so tiny her father's wedding band slipped on her arm with room to spare. Her skin was transparent and her veins struggled to hold an IV. Her ears had not yet formed and her eyes were fused shut. She spent her first 96 days fighting for life in a newborn intensive care unit (NICU).

It was a difficult time for the Halerz family. Spending time in the NICU can be frightening and overwhelming for parents, especially when they must go home each night and leave their precious baby behind.



Today, Caley has grown into a healthy 2-year-old who loves to play with her brother Ty.

Premature babies are not just small babies. They are babies who are not ready to be born, and they require specialized care to help them thrive. March of Dimes funded the research on surfactant therapy and nitric oxide, two applications that help underdeveloped lungs of preterm babies to breathe easier. Since the development of these two therapies, two-thirds of the babies who would have died from respiratory distress syndrome now survive their early birth.

Premature birth touches nearly half a million babies and their families each year. Babies born too soon are more likely to die or have disabilities. The March of Dimes is committed to reducing this toll by funding research to find the causes of premature birth and providing comfort and information to families.

Caley's parents, Denielle and Mark know the significant role that March of Dimes research played in helping Caley get this far. As the 2014 Altoona/Johnstown Ambassador Family they will share their story and help raise awareness of premature birth. They hope their story can provide hope for other families and help the March of Dimes to reach the day when all babies are born strong and healthy.



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