

# Shawn Smyth-Toner

2015 March of Dimes Ambassador  
Temple-Ambler March for Babies

Like many expectant parents Patti Smyth and John Toner were excited about growing their family. But then their baby, Shawn, was born two months early, weighing only 3lbs. 2 oz. Shawn spent his first five (5) weeks fighting for life in a newborn intensive care unit (NICU).

It was a difficult time for the Smyth family. Patti remembers seeing Shawn for the first time. He seemed so fragile. Due to his difficulties breathing and eating, he had tubes in his nose and throat and his eyes were protected by padded sunglasses. Shawn faced many challenges, but he was a fighter. Thankfully, after 43 days in the NICU, Shawn was finally able to come home.

Today Shawn is a typical little boy. He loves karate, building with Legos, playing with his super-heros, ninja turtles and playing outdoors, despite his asthma.

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.

Shawn's parents, Patti and John, know the significant role that March of Dimes research played in helping Shawn get this far. As the 2015 Temple-Ambler March for Babies Ambassador Family they will share their story and help raise awareness of birth defects and 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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