

# MOTHERS AND BABIES

## Babies Born Too Soon—A Growing Threat

(NAPSA)—Every year more American babies are born prematurely—a half-million this year alone—causing an emotional roller coaster of uncertainty for their families. Will the baby survive? Will the baby be all right?

To help inform people about the severity of the problem, three moms share their own gripping, early-childbirth stories as March of Dimes National Ambassadors—meeting with volunteers, corporations, celebrities and government representatives.

Michelle Reeves, a receptionist with Wachovia, knows how serious and costly a problem premature birth can be. Her daughter, Amanda, was born 14 weeks early weighing 1 lb., 7 oz. Amanda spent her first 84 days in a neonatal intensive care unit. March of Dimes advances, such as surfactant therapy, as well as treatments for anemia, vision and other problems of prematurity, helped her win the battle and today she's a happy six-year-old.

Susan Henderson, a lawyer, had an equally harrowing birth. Her daughter, Emma, was born three months premature, weighing only 1 lb., 12 oz. and given a one in ten chance of survival.

Emma spent 101 days in the NICU, undergoing several surgeries to correct problems with her brain and eyes. Today, Emma is a smiling, athletic nine-year-old, who lives with a permanent shunt in her brain and a diagnosis of mild cerebral palsy.

Dorenda Washington works for American Airlines. Her son Justin



**Premature birth is a common, costly and serious problem for all Americans and much more research is needed.**

was born four months premature, weighing 1 lb., 8.5 oz. at birth. He underwent numerous surgeries during the first weeks of life, but today the 10-year-old is outgoing and full of life.

“Not all children who are born this early are as lucky as these three,” said Dr. Jennifer L. Howse, president of the March of Dimes, the nonprofit organization leading the fight against premature birth. “Many children who are born prematurely have life-long health concerns, such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy and lung and hearing problems and some do not survive.”

The cause of premature birth is still unknown. A woman can do everything right and still have a premature child. “That’s where March of Dimes comes in—with research,” said Dr. Howse.

More information about preterm labor and premature birth can be found at [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com) or March of Dimes Spanish Web site at [nacersano.org](http://nacersano.org).