

MUNSON HEALTHCARE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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March of Dimes, Munson Help Families of Infants

Organization's \$1,200 grant will provide parents with infant crib/playpen

March of Dimes and Munson Medical Center are teaming up this year to help parents of premature infants with gifts of new crib/playpens.

A Priority Solution's International \$1,200 grant to March of Dimes will fund 10 to 15 "Pack and Play Beds" to be distributed to families in need who have babies born in Munson's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

The donation comes in honor of March of Dimes' National Prematurity Awareness Day, Tuesday, Nov. 14.

"This day is something that the March of Dimes has started due to the rising issue of premature births," said Bernadette Carney, Traverse City Division director for March of Dimes. "This celebration is all over the country with buildings and even Niagara Falls being lit up in the colors of pink and blue."

Data from the National Center for Health Statistics reveals the percentage of babies born prematurely has risen to more than 12.5 percent, the highest level in two decades, and a more than 30 percent increase since 1981, Carney said. In January 2003, March of Dimes launched a multiyear multimillion-dollar "Prematurity Campaign" to find solutions for the rising premature births.

Each year, Munson's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit cares for 350 to 400 babies born prematurely.

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Manager Steve Barkel said the gifts will provide great help to families who thought they had more time to prepare for their babies.

"Priority Solutions' donation will directly impact families in Northern Michigan," he said. "We appreciate the March of Dimes as a link between corporate donors and the real needs of families with premature babies in our community."

Carney said 75 cents of every dollar donated to the March of Dimes Prematurity Campaign goes directly to medical research aimed at preventing premature births. Experts estimate the cost of pre-term birth to the nation's economy in 2005 was at least \$26.2 billion.

More information about National Prematurity Awareness Day and March of Dimes national campaign can be found at www.marchofdimes.com.

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