BEHIND THE DATA

OUR IMPACT ON THE STORIES OF REAL FAMILIES

ANNUAL REPORT
2019
Two babies die every hour in the U.S. And one woman dies every 12 hours as a result of complications from pregnancy.

Our stories give strength to ourselves and they give strength to other women. And each of us has a story. By coming together, our collective power can force the change that we need to reverse these statistics.”

STACEY D. STEWART
MARCH OF DIMES
PRESIDENT AND CEO, AND MOM
Dear Friends and Supporters,

March of Dimes is dedicated to leading the fight for the health of all moms and babies—that’s our mission. During 2019, with your help we fought the pervasive maternal and infant health issues affecting our communities. However, we can’t talk about yesterday without addressing today.

The COVID-19 pandemic dominating our lives since early 2020 underlines how critical our work is in laying the foundation for healthy moms and strong babies. The stark reality is that the U.S. is among the most dangerous developed nations for childbirth—and that’s during the best of times.

The truth is we can’t give up hope. We must believe that we can fix this problem. Families need us—always—so we’re tackling the biggest issues head on, including maternal death, preterm birth and the social determinants of health. Our fight also includes chronic inequities and unequal access to quality care that have a negative impact on preterm birth rates. Women of color have an up to 50 percent higher rate of preterm birth than White women. And it’s unacceptable that Black women are dying at higher rates than all other races, and almost two-thirds of maternal deaths are preventable.

Behind the data are real families who need us—always.

Through constant collaboration and innovation in our research, advocacy and programmatic work, we advanced toward our goal to help all four million babies born in the U.S. each year, and their moms and families. We made an impact by:

- Supporting women with programs like Supportive Pregnancy Care and NICU Family Support to help moms and their babies with education, comfort and care across the country.
- Challenging the status quo and calling attention to the worsening maternal and infant health crisis with our #ItsNotFine campaign.
- Evolving our six Prematurity Research Centers to a new research model to bring real world solutions to millions of families.
- Harnessing the power of our collective voice to advocate for positive change in all areas of government.
- Funding studies to investigate how social policies impact birth outcomes.
- Uniting on collective action to prevent prematurity.

Our events, campaigns and activations reached moms and families where they live and across social media with education, action and awareness every day, delivering tools and essential resources. And we engaged 1,050,000 digital subscribers who took 98,000 digital actions in 2019, including 858,000 social actions.

As 2020 has shown, the world can present unforeseen challenges for moms and babies, especially those most at risk. This just strengthens our resolve to convene powerful partners and supporters, to be there when we’re most needed and to take action for families today and generations to come.

Thank you and stay safe,

Stacey D. Stewart

STACEY D. STEWART
PRESIDENT AND CEO

MARCHOFDIMES.ORG/ANNUALREPORT
IT’S NOT FINE. BUT WITH YOUR HELP IT CAN BE.

In 2019 we set out to increase awareness of the dangers to mom and baby health—not to scare people, but to surface the facts and use them to create change. We did this through stories. Each of us, or someone we know, has a pregnancy or childbirth story that often goes unsaid. These #UnspokenStories are the heart of our supportive community for moms and families to share experiences from the joys of parenting to the heartbreak of loss. We went even further by launching #ItsNotFine, a public awareness campaign to call attention to the worsening health crisis, highlighting maternal risks and death and health inequity. We invited everyone to declare it’s not fine, and through real-life stories, focused on moms and families, particularly in underserved or at-risk communities.

This campaign resonated with me so powerfully because that’s what we were told—we were told that Kira was going to be fine. But when she went back into that operating room that was the last time I saw her alive. The state of maternal health in this country is not fine.”

CHARLES
MARCH OF DIMES DAD, WHOSE WIFE KIRA DIED SHORTLY AFTER GIVING BIRTH

#ItsNotFine generated 950 stories from women who didn’t accept the statement “You’ll be fine” before and after pregnancy.

#UnspokenStories collected 286 honest stories of pregnancy, parenthood and loss that are too often unshared.

Read on to see other ways you made our impact possible for moms and babies in 2019.
LEADING THE WAY FOR MOMS AND BABIES

Before, during and after pregnancy, we supported families throughout their pregnancy journey where they needed us most. Women across the country received group medical care, prenatal education, childbirth preparation and postpartum care education in our Supportive Pregnancy Care sites.

We supported thousands of families in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) through our NICU Family Support® program (NFS) and other programming and resource initiatives. NFS partners with hospitals to educate NICU families and staff, and improve the family and patient experience.

“NICU Family Support was super helpful. It was great to have somebody who I felt was on our side that wasn’t just a doctor or nurse.”

Tiffany
NICU Mom

In 2019, the National Prematurity Collaborative took steps toward transforming into the new Mom and Baby Action Network. This results-based framework will help us identify root causes of inequitable maternal and infant health, and enable us to better align with partners to make impactful movement and measurable action toward achieving equity.

“March of Dimes is leading the effort to impact birth equity across the nation, understanding and recognizing that it takes an entire community to have an impact. And that’s where the collective impact efforts start to play a role.”

DR. RAHUL GUPTA
SVP & CHIEF MEDICAL AND HEALTH OFFICER INTERIM CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER, RESEARCH & GLOBAL PROGRAMS
We’re rewriting the story for moms and babies to bring real world solutions to millions of families. In 2019, our six Prematurity Research Centers (PRCs) entered the next phase of research to explore preterm birth and serious maternal health problems. Moving from discovery science in the lab to translational science, we evolved our PRCs to a new research model targeting four of the most significant causes of preterm birth—maternal stress and environment; genetic factors; inflammation and infection; and maternal comorbidities.

Researchers at Imperial College London learned from their microbiome data that a certain species, Lactobacillus crispatus, plays a beneficial role in the maternal microbiome. They found that a microbiome predominantly made up of lactobacillus species is associated with healthy pregnancy outcomes. These data led them to test a supplement of L. crispatus in a clinical trial with the goal of rebalancing the microbiome to be less inflammatory and prevent preterm birth.

Preterm labor can happen for many different reasons, but one cause may be an imbalance of bacteria. With the help of March of Dimes, we’re exploring a simple treatment which might help to prevent preterm birth, or to improve the outcome for some babies who are born preterm.”

PHILLIP BENNETT
DIRECTOR MARCH OF DIMES PREMATURITY RESEARCH CENTRE AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON
SPEAKING OUT AND SOLVING CHALLENGES FOR FAMILIES

Our Center for Social Science Research investigates the relationship between social and environmental factors, economic and employer policies, and pregnancy in the U.S. to identify policy and program solutions that increase equity and improve health outcomes for moms and babies.

In one of its biggest communications milestones of the year, the March of Dimes Center for Social Science Research (CSSR) estimated the societal cost of prematurity, including medical, educational and lost productivity costs. This data was added as a new feature in the 2019 March of Dimes Report Card—released November 4, during Prematurity Awareness Month—to elevate awareness of the serious health crisis.

We persuaded policymakers to pass laws and regulations that promote the health of women, babies and families. We came together to advocate for nationwide change, including helping to get the Newborn Screening Saves Lives Reauthorization Act of 2019 passed through the House of Representatives to continue screening every baby for life-threatening problems.

We advocated on behalf of, against or monitored more than 150 state legislative bills.

We continued screening the 4 million babies born each year.
We wouldn’t be able to provide moms-to-be with services, find research treatments or help families in their communities without support from people like you. Longtime, dedicated March of Dimes supporters, Annette and Jim Alling, are shining examples of the amazing volunteers and donors who champion our cause. In 2019 they joined the Roosevelt Society to help bring NICU Family Support to Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles. Annette has played a critical role in raising funds for this program.

“Our son was born at 26 weeks in 1994, and he wouldn’t have survived without a lung treatment funded by March of Dimes,” Annette said. “But we learned that they do so much more like push our state capitals for more thorough testing to reduce preterm birth and provide information for parents throughout pregnancy while in the NICU and in all situations.”

Annette

The NICU Family Support program is closest to my heart, and is amazing for families in so many ways. My wish would be for every hospital with a level 3 or 4 nursery to have this program in its NICU.”

Jim

I love volunteering as a parent mentor because I know how hard it is to have a child in the NICU. When I spend time with families in the NICU, I’m able to tell them our story and give them hope. I can see and feel how much I’m helping someone right in front of me.”

Annette
It’s not fine that each year, thousands of families deal with complications from pregnancy and preterm birth. In 2019, communities across the nation united with us to ensure that every mom and baby has the opportunity to be healthy and strong. Our family teams, corporate partners and tens of thousands of people walked in March for Babies, our largest fundraiser.

We also hosted other inspiring events, which raised a combined $30 million, such as Gourmet Gala where legislators gathered for friendly competition and good food, and Signature Chefs that brought together leading culinary talent to create signature dishes for our supporters.

“It’s so critical for us here to support March of Dimes because Texas has one of the highest prematurity rates in the country. And so coming out and supporting March of Dimes, there’s not a better cause.”

GREG THOMPSON
WEST TEXAS MARCH OF DIMES BOARD CHAIR
SIGNATURE CHEFS - LUBBOCK, TEXAS

Everybody coming together for the same purpose, walking for the same purpose, just showing strength. It means that there’s a light at the end of the tunnel. That’s what March for Babies means for us.”

JANITA
MARCH FOR BABIES FAMILY TEAM MEMBER
GOURMET GALA
BUILDING ON THE SUPPORT OF PASSIONATE PEOPLE

For more than 80 years, we’ve brought high-profile personalities together to make a direct impact on the lives of moms and babies through service and collaboration. We kept that legacy strong in 2019.

Celebrating 36 years of the sports and media industries support, our 2019 New York Sports Luncheon raised a record-breaking $1.2M, with over 800 executives in attendance for this special event. We were proud to honor: Steve Tisch, chairman of the New York Giants; the NFL in honor of their 100th season; Lindsey Vonn, Olympic gold medalist; and CC Sabathia of the New York Yankees.

Along with the #ItsNotFine campaign, March of Dimes announced the new Celebrity Advocate Council to amplify the voices of thousands of families impacted by pregnancy complications and preterm birth each year. The first advocates named to the Council are Ally Brooke, Nick Lachey, Porsha Williams and Tatyana Ali. By using their platforms to share their own personal experiences, they raised awareness of mom and baby issues that aren’t being talked about enough.

“I’m involved because I have my story that I want to tell. We women can share what we’ve been through around pregnancies. We can help save other people’s lives by pushing the initiative that we want to have many more healthy moms and strong babies.”

PORSHA WILLIAMS
STAR OF REAL HOUSEWIVES OF ATLANTA
OUR PARTNERS

Fueled by generous support from all of our corporate partners and supporters, we’ve achieved great strides in research advancements, advocacy wins, innovative program expansion and access to care for women—all to give moms and babies the best possible start. We’re grateful for your steadfast commitment and investment in our mission.

We are honored to recognize the following local, regional and national partners for their exemplary support throughout 2019:

$5 MILLION

Publix

$1-2 MILLION

macys*  Pampers  HCA Healthcare  Anthem

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$500K+

H-E-B  rb  GE  MBNA  Cigna

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PSEG  CenterPoint Energy  ucb  PHILIPS  GM

carter's  Longs Drugs  Hilton  BlueCross BlueShield  BIG 5
These organizations and companies also share our commitment to improve maternal and infant health and birth outcomes.

$100K+

Advocate Aurora Health
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** This list does not include many of our generous local supporters, however, we're no less grateful to them for their incredible support.
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Once I got the information around what’s happening in women’s health here in the U.S., I had to get involved. Healthy women make for healthy families, make for healthy communities, make for a healthy world. I know that. So that’s why I’m here.”

TONYA LEWIS LEE
MARCH OF DIMES BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBER
EVERY MOM AND BABY SHOULD BE HEALTHY REGARDLESS OF WEALTH, RACE OR GEOGRAPHY.
TOGETHER WE CAN REACH THAT GOAL.

"We got to bring home a healthy baby. The research they’ve done, the campaigns that they have, the spreading of information so mothers know—that’s the result of March of Dimes.”

LISA
MARCH FOR BABIES MOM