

# PURPLE ENDS PREMATUREITY

Prematurity Awareness Month®

College Volunteers Guide

march  of dimes  
teamyouth®

### Turn your campus PURPLE to end prematurity!

In the United States, 1 in 9 babies is born too soon, and many who survive face serious health problems. We need **your** help to spread awareness of this costly and serious problem!

Celebrate World Prematurity Day on November 17 and throughout the entire month of November by displaying your purple passion to end prematurity! Check out our step-by-step guide for each event and get ready to make an impact! Go the extra mile by doing multiple events and/or combined events to make one large prematurity awareness extravaganza!

Employers pay \$12 billion annually in excess health care costs for premature babies, and our country spends \$26 billion in total.

### How to turn your campus PURPLE — sample events:

- Light Your Campus in PURPLE
- Dress Your Campus in PURPLE

Get creative! Host a PURPLE event of your choice that helps raise awareness and funds for the March of Dimes.

**Be sure to register your school** and event with the March of Dimes online at [marchofdimes.org/youth](http://marchofdimes.org/youth) to receive updates and resources to help make your event even more successful!

### Before you begin:

- Rally your classmates: Gather a group of dedicated volunteers by educating your classmates and peers about the impact of premature birth and the importance of raising awareness. Depending on the event, you may need some help to make your event a success. Check out our [speaking points \(pg. 9\)](#) for ideas on what to say.
- Utilizing our [sample letter and email \(pg. 7\)](#), set up a meeting with your administration to discuss the importance of World Prematurity Day, and explain that you want to host a specific event to raise awareness.
- Check out our [spread the word page \(pg. 8\)](#) for ways to talk about World Prematurity Day on social media. Tell everyone why you feel PURPLE!



### Need more help?

- Contact [teamyouth@marchofdimes.org](mailto:teamyouth@marchofdimes.org)
- Be sure to follow us on Facebook - #MarchofDimesYouth — and on Twitter - @teamyouth.



### Light your campus in PURPLE!

Celebrate Prematurity Awareness Month® throughout November and World Prematurity Day on November 17 by lighting up your campus in purple, the March of Dimes color! Remember to gather your peers and get your school on board.

*Can't light the entire campus in purple?* Ask to light a high-traffic area, a historic or significant monument, or a well-populated building on campus. This could be a dorm building, the football stadium or even inside the student union. Discuss these and alternative options with administration.



- 1. After getting administrative approval check the lighting options:** Building maintenance personnel may know the process needed to change the lighting (both interior and exterior) to purple. If lighting multiple buildings, be sure to ask about each building.
- 2. Gather the equipment:** Purple light bulbs are typically available in hardware stores, and the cost varies based on type. Personnel may have suggestions where to purchase the supplies or have them donated. An alternative to changing bulbs is covering existing ones with approved light filters — your theater or music department may have some you can borrow.

*Unable to light your campus or looking for a way to complement your lighting?* Consider decorating a high-traffic area (such as the student union) in purple (balloons, posters, balloon arch, banners, etc.)

- 3. Light it up PURPLE!** Here are a few suggestions for hosting an unforgettable purple lighting ceremony. Remember to promote your lighting throughout campus (post flyers, host an information booth, and publicize within the campus newspaper, website, radio/television station, etc.).
  - Invite a local leader on campus (student government president, university president, football team captain, etc.) to serve as emcee to kick off the ceremony and “turn on the lights.”
  - Provide candles or flashlights to attendees, instructing every ninth person to turn their light off or on at a specific time — symbolizing that 1 in 9 babies is born too soon each year in the United States.
  - Provide information about the serious and costly effects of premature birth. Visit [marchofdimes.org/prematurity](http://marchofdimes.org/prematurity).

- Invite someone with a connection to the March of Dimes mission to share his or her story.
- Share one of the many stories available at [youtube.com/marchofdimes](https://youtube.com/marchofdimes).

### Make a bigger impact

- Invite a local band/DJ to perform and turn the lighting ceremony into a celebration!
- Secure food donations from local restaurants or other sources. Check with your campus bookstore and cafeteria to see if they'll donate food and/or gifts.
- Pass out purple buckets throughout to collect donations to help fund the reasons why babies are born too soon. Submit donations to your local March of Dimes office.

### Dress your campus in PURPLE

Raise awareness and funds to help end prematurity, all dressed in purple, the March of Dimes color! Remember to get administrative approval before hosting the event.

1. **Assign roles and finalize logistics:** At least 1 month beforehand, brainstorm as a group to discuss fun and interesting ways to engage your campus. Set up additional group meetings (perhaps weekly) to discuss and finalize logistics. If working in conjunction with another event, check out these tips to ensure success:
  - Family weekend: Host an information booth educating both parents and students on the serious impact of premature birth in a high-traffic area.
  - Sporting event: During halftime, host a moment of silence in honor of the 15 million babies born too soon worldwide each year, and in remembrance of the million who did not survive.
  - Homecoming: Does your campus put on a parade or other large-scale event during homecoming? Brainstorm and seek approval for ways you can include prematurity awareness within these events.

*Need more help?* Make it a community event and invite other clubs/organizations to assist. You will have extra hands to help and more people to raise awareness!

2. **Dress it up PURPLE!** Here are a few suggestions to promote and enhance your Dress Your Campus in PURPLE event.
  - Post purple markings (balloon, ribbon, poster, etc.) on every 9th tree, dorm room, parking space and/or bicycle stand.
  - Set up a donation drive, collecting items for the local newborn intensive care unit (NICU). Be sure to check with your local March of Dimes office to see what items, if any, the local NICU needs before hosting a collection drive.



- Host a presentation about premature birth and/or invite someone with a connection to the March of Dimes mission to share his or her story before or during intermission at an upcoming school play or concert or during halftime at the next football game.
- Encourage resident advisors or dorm leaders to dedicate their hall or building to prematurity awareness by posting facts about premature birth and educating residents.
- Chalk facts about prematurity on sidewalks, parking lots or other paved areas. Visit [marchofdimes.org/prematurity](http://marchofdimes.org/prematurity)

### Make a bigger impact

- Help fund research to find the reasons why so many babies are born too soon. Sell purple awareness bands/ribbons and T-shirts (work with local businesses to have the shirts donated). Submit donations to your local March of Dimes office.
- Create a contest to see who can wear the most purple — from head to toe! Think socks, shoes, shirts, accessories, even hair color. If you can wear it, make it purple!
- Provide football players with purple armbands to wear during their next game.

### Get Creative — Host a PURPLE Event!

Hosting a purple event at school is a great way to use your creativity to raise awareness and funds to help end prematurity! Remember to gather your peers and get your school on board.

1. **Assign roles and finalize logistics:** At least a month before your event, brainstorm as a group to discuss fun and interesting ideas to engage your classmates and make your event unforgettable. Be sure to meet as a group (perhaps weekly) to discuss and finalize logistics (including marketing, event setup/clean up and entertainment (live band, DJ, etc.).

*Need more help?* Make it a community event and invite other clubs/organizations to assist. You will have extra hands to help and more people to raise awareness!

2. **Host your PURPLE event!** Here are a few suggestions for hosting an unforgettable purple event. Remember to promote the event throughout school leading up to the day (post flyers, host an information booth outside the cafeteria, and publicize within your school newspaper and website).



- Post 1 in 9 markings throughout the event (such as every ninth balloon is white while the rest are purple) — symbolizing that 1 in 9 babies is born too early each year in the United States. Include March of Dimes information along with the marking.
- Find an emcee to kick off the event. This could be a local leader at school or in the community, such as your Student Government President, a popular professor, or even your mascot!
- Provide information about the serious and costly effects of premature birth.
- Invite someone with a connection to the March of Dimes mission to share his or her story.
- Share one of the many stories available at [youtube.com/marchofdimes](http://youtube.com/marchofdimes).



### To make a bigger impact

- Charge an entry fee with the proceeds to be donated to the March of Dimes to help fund research into the reasons why so many babies are born too soon.
- Secure food donations from local restaurants or other sources. Reach out to local businesses for incentives and prizes.
- Invite a local band/DJ to perform.
- Invite your school band, music club or even sketch comedy club to be the entertainment



**Sample letter and email to school administrators**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_\_

This November, the (MARCH OF DIMES VOLUNTEER GROUP) is celebrating Prematurity Awareness Month®. We are joining the March of Dimes by going PURPLE to help end prematurity and recognize the 156 million babies worldwide who are born too soon every year!

In honor of Prematurity Awareness Month, we will be hosting a PURPLE (EVENT NAME). (EVENT) will be held on (DATE) at (LOCATION) at (TIME). AT (EVENT), guests will (DESCRIBE EVENT). (SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION) can support our efforts by (INCLUDE SHORT DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST).

We hope you and the school will support our Prematurity Awareness Month activities. I would love to meet with you to share more information about the (EVENT) and Prematurity Awareness Month at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for working to end prematurity!  
(Name of volunteer attending the school to which this letter is being sent)

cc: (Campus Leader, March of Dimes local office)



## Spread the word

Post these Facebook statuses, Tweets and Instagrams to raise awareness to end prematurity. Don't forget to hashtag #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity.

### Facebook

Add **"Feeling PURPLE"** at the bottom of your status!

- November is Prematurity Awareness Month®. Help the March of Dimes end prematurity. UR the FUTURE. [facebook.com/marchofdimes](https://www.facebook.com/marchofdimes) #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- URGENT: More than a million babies worldwide do not SURVIVE because they were born too soon. UR SURVIVAL. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity.
- How important are your eyes? Your lungs? Your brain? Babies need 39 weeks to develop them! Help end prematurity! #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Even babies born just a couple weeks early are at risk for lifelong disabilities such as cerebral palsy, lung problems, and vision and hearing loss. UR able to change the future for millions of babies because #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity

### Twitter

Post these tweets throughout November to encourage your followers to help end premature birth. Get creative and come up with your own tweets!

- November 17 is World Prematurity Day. What will U do? #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- 1 in 9 U.S. babies is born too soon every year! How will U spread the word? #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Every year, 1 million babies worldwide die before their 1st bday because they were born early, but UR able to make a difference. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- 15 million babies are born too soon around the world every year. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Premature babies need UR help! UR the FUTURE. #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity
- Were U born prematurely? Share UR story in honor of Prematurity Awareness Month! #worldprematurityday #endsprematurity

### Instagram

Try out these instas during Prematurity Awareness Month to continue spreading the word.

- Post a picture of yourself wearing all purple. In your caption, explain that November is Prematurity Awareness Month and why you feel PURPLE. Tag your friends, asking them to do the same!
- Every Thursday in November, post a #TBT of yourself when you were a baby! In your caption, explain that November is Prematurity Awareness Month and why you feel PURPLE. Encourage your followers to do the same.



## Speaking points

What do you say when talking about the March of Dimes and Prematurity Awareness Month®? Check out these speaking points. Use them as Facebook status updates and tweets.

- November is Prematurity Awareness Month, when the March of Dimes focuses everyone’s attention on the impact premature birth has on babies and families.
- November 17 is World Prematurity Day, when we ask people to spread the word about the serious problem of premature birth. Visit [facebook.com/marchofdimes](https://facebook.com/marchofdimes) and [facebook.com/worldprematurityday](https://facebook.com/worldprematurityday) to find out how you can help.
- Every year, 15 million babies are born prematurely worldwide. More than a million of them die before their first birthday.
- In the United States, almost half a million babies are born too soon each year — that’s 1 in 9. The premature birth rate in our country is higher than that in many other developed nations.
- In November, the March of Dimes releases its seventh annual report card that scores the nation and each state on its rate of premature birth.
- Premature birth is the # 1 cause of death during the first month of life. Even babies born just a few weeks too soon can face serious health challenges and are at risk for lifelong disabilities, such as cerebral palsy, lung problems, and vision and hearing loss.
- Premature birth means a baby is born too early. Babies aren’t fully developed until at least 39 weeks of pregnancy. Important development of their brains, lungs and eyes occurs in the last few weeks of pregnancy.
- Most premature babies are born between 34 and 37 weeks of pregnancy; this is called late preterm birth. If a pregnancy is healthy, it’s best to let labor begin on its own instead of scheduling a delivery. Babies born after 39 weeks have fewer health problems than babies born early.
- Mom’s health is the best indicator of her baby’s health. Early and regular prenatal care is very important to monitor mom and baby to identify problems before they become serious. Every mom-to-be should know the signs of preterm labor and what to do if they occur.

