



Michigan Chapter Communications Plan



For stronger, healthier babies



This project was completed as the final requirement in the completion of a Master's Degree in the field of Public Administration with a concentration in Nonprofit Organization Management

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Notes

This communications plan is meant to be a guide to streamline the March of Dimes Michigan chapter's communications with its donors, volunteers and community members in an effort to raise mission and program awareness in a consistent way throughout the state's eight divisions.

As a former Community Director in Metro Detroit and Family Teams Specialist in Ann Arbor, I know first-hand how difficult it can be to do everything you want to do. There are simply not enough hours in the day. I also know through my personal experience as well as through my education how important communications are to nonprofits like March of Dimes (MOD). This is the stuff that appeals to the hearts of our donors and ultimately helps us raise more money and gain new supporters along the way.

Although the steps that are laid out in the coming pages are comprehensive and intended for use in all methods of communication, I have narrowed my focus on the actual content I have created in this plan to social media, while outlining recommendations for other communications techniques that can be used alongside social media. I chose to focus on social media after reviewing a multitude of research findings explaining that staying relevant and engaged with constituents on social media is the most important thing a nonprofit can do today in terms of its communications strategy. Whether we like it or not, social media is taking over the nonprofit world. This is why it is imperative for MOD's Michigan chapter to make social media a top priority for both program and revenue development.

You can find all of the following materials in MOD's share drive in a format that can be edited to reflect your division and distributed easily without having to re-create anything. The location of these materials is: Share/Communications in a folder entitled 'Michigan Chapter Communications Plan'. I have also included some additional content in this same location on the share drive that show our mission impact, but for the purpose of space, are not included

here. This additional content is up-to-date and relevant and can be used for various communications purposes.

It is my hope that you will find this to be a useful resource and that this plan will serve as a guide that you can give to your volunteers and interns to assist in implementing, saving you valuable time and ultimately benefitting your division and the chapter as a whole while advancing the mission of the March of Dimes.

Abstract

Due to social, cultural and technological changes over the last two decades, communications in nonprofit organizations have experienced several major shifts in the marketing and communications arena. In order to remain successful, nonprofits such as the March of Dimes Foundation must adapt to these changes in order to remain relevant and successful. One key way to do this is through the creation and implementation of a modern nonprofit communications plan. The major changes that have occurred are discussed and recommended steps in devising a successful communications plan are used to provide an overview of how the March of Dimes Michigan Chapter can capitalize on these changes and create an effective and innovative communications strategy.

Project Outline/Table of Contents

Part I. Changes in Nonprofit Communications.....page 8

1. Community engagement.....page 9
2. Generational Changes....page 11
3. Technological Changes.....page 13

Part II. Creating a Modern Communications Plan.....page 15

1. Defining Goals and Objectives.....page 16
2. Identifying Stakeholders.....page 18
3. Creating a Timeline.....page 20
4. Finding Our Voice.....page 23
5. Choosing Communications Methods.....page 29
6. The Plan-Content.....page 33
7. Program Evaluation and Metrics Analysis.....page 60

Discussion.....page 61

References.....page 63

Adapting for Success: The Modern Nonprofit Communications Plan

Introduction

Communication is defined as “the expression of thoughts, feelings and information; to be joined or connected,” (www.m-w.com, 2014). Communication is at the heart of everything we do at home, at work and at play. It is the basic foundation of who we are. Communication helps us to feel united with one another and with our communities, fulfilling our basic human need for connection. From the pictographs carved on the rocks of Mesopotamia in 3,000 B.C. to the smart phone tweets of 2014, human beings have continuously adapted to changes in communication over time. If we want to send someone a message today, we do not get out our quill pen and dip it in ink. In fact, most of us do not get out a pen at all. Instead, we let our fingertips do the talking.

Just as we have adapted to changes in communication techniques, so too must today’s nonprofit organizations adapt to their field’s changes in communication trends in order to survive and thrive today and in the future.

This project consists of two parts. Part I details the research on how nonprofit communications techniques and trends have changed over time and how we as today’s nonprofit organization leaders must adapt to these changes in order to remain relevant in the eyes of today’s donor population who are coming to us with changing needs and higher expectations. Part II puts this research to use in the creation of a modern communications plan for the Michigan chapter of the March of Dimes Foundation.

20 th Century	21 st Century
Outbound communications/target audience	Community Engagement
Text Communication	Visual Storytelling
NPO Controlled	Community Controlled
Mail	Mobile
2 Main Generations of Donors	4 Main Generations of Donors-More Diverse
NPO Centered	Donor Centered

Table 1-How nonprofit communications have changed from the 20th to the 21st century.

Part I

21st Century Changes in Nonprofit Communications

The successful communications strategy of a nonprofit organization enables us to reach our audiences and convey our missions and other important messages to our donors. It allows us to share our passion with others near and far, to build our relationships and to open new doors. Prevalent methods of communicating with donors and supporters have shifted over time, most recently undergoing a shift from a focus on outbound communications to a focus on community engagement.

Moving Toward Community Engagement

In the past, nonprofit marketing techniques were characterized by what we call outbound communications (Miller, 2013, p 26). An outbound communication is a method of sharing information that does not require a response on the part of the receiver. Communication begins with the organization and ends when the message reaches the intended audience. Outbound communications, such as direct mail, are looked at as a way to get an organization's message across to as many people as possible in hopes that they will simply see it, read it or hear about it and then, as a result, want to donate, volunteer, or become involved in some other way (Miller, 2013, p 26). In today's world however, outbound communications are no longer the go-to method. Communications are often no longer focused in one direction, but rather exist as a *back-and-forth flow* between the organization and its community members in what we now call interactive communication or community engagement (Miller, 2013, p 4). "Engagement means getting people to interact with your organization in ways that build a relationship between them and your organization, so they are more likely to follow through on actions that help you achieve your mission," (Miller, 2013, p 4). Examples of the rise in popularity of community engagement can be seen in today's online social networks.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are based on the concept of community engagement and may be credited as the driving force that has revolutionized the

way we as humans communicate with one another. The rise of social networking sites has several implications in the nonprofit sector. It is now much easier for a supporter (and also for a protester) to start a conversation with a nonprofit in a very public way. In this way, everyone becomes a potential spokesperson for the organization. Nonprofit leadership must accept the fact that they are no longer in full control of the content that is being produced and distributed about them. "Your brand, your talking points, and your story are no longer yours alone to construct and discuss," (Miller, 2013, p 10). Whether we like the thought of this or not, this is the reality and to it, we must adapt. Today's donors do not want to be broadcasted to; rather, they would like to be part of a conversation (Miller, 2013, p 4).

Social networking has proven to have a direct correlation to the amount of perceived legitimacy an organization has as well as the level of trust an organization's stakeholders have in them (Johansen & LeRoux, 2013). When we are able to appeal to our donors' hearts and make them feel included, we allow ourselves to have a truly lasting impact. The late Maya Angelou once said, "I have learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." This quote describes what is at the heart of community engagement. "When you build a community around you, you create opportunities to build rapport with many of its members as individuals, and when they truly become friends to your cause, they will spread the word for you, friend-raising and fundraising as they go," (Miller, 2013, p 13). This statement describes the beauty and power that community engagement has on an organization that maximizes its opportunities to participate in this new and exciting endeavor.

A 2012 Nonprofit Donor Engagement Benchmark Study found that there are numerous benefits of employing a community engagement initiative in a nonprofit organization, such as 1) 47% of donors give the highest philanthropic gift to the organization with whom they're most engaged, 2) Almost 30% of supporters will fundraise on behalf of an organization that they are

highly engaged with, and 3) 54% would talk to family and friends about an organization with whom they are highly engaged (Aitchison, 2012).

One innovative way that organizations can capitalize on the growing popularity of community engagement, especially with the use of current social media tools, is through the implementation of visual storytelling into their communications plans. Visual storytelling is defined as “the use of images, videos, infographics, presentations and other visuals on social media platforms to craft a graphical story around key brand values and offerings,” (Walter & Gioglio, 2014, p 7). Visual storytelling is a smart response to the recent changes in media channels and communication techniques, allowing nonprofit communicators to better engage with stakeholders.

Studies have shown that the act of adding a visual component to a piece of text greatly increases the response and engagement levels. Posts including photo albums or pictures obtain 120 to 180 percent more engagement from fans than text-based posts (Walter & Gioglio, 2014 p 8). Likewise, Facebook posts that include pictures have an average 37 percent higher engagement rate than posts without photos (Walter & Gioglio, 2014, p 8). Visual storytelling can be used to share an organization’s mission, values and impact in a memorable and meaningful way. “Sharing stories of how others are affected by your work, outreach and mission will build credibility and encourage empathy,” (Jarrett, 2012). Visual storytelling may just be the most powerful new tool we can find in our nonprofit marketing toolbox.

Generational Changes

In addition to the shift from outbound communications to community engagement, nonprofit organizations today are also seeking to appeal to a wider range of supporters across more generations. One of the most important things we can do in creating effective communications strategies is to learn about our stakeholders. When we understand who our stakeholders are and what they want, we are able to tailor our content in a way that meets their needs and expectations (Miller, 2013, p 20).

When it comes to learning about an organization's stakeholders, a little research can go a long way. A 2012 *Huffington Post* article by Ira Wolfe entitled "A Digital Divide Grows Between Baby Boomers...and Other Boomers?" offers some interesting insights into how different generations view philanthropy. The mature generation, those born in 1945 or earlier, is most known to give to causes out of a sense of duty. Generally speaking, they feel it is their responsibility to do the right thing. The baby boomer generation, those born between 1946 and 1964, tend to give to a cause because giving fits well with their sense of identity. Generation X, those born between 1965 and 1980, often choose to give out of a sense of entrepreneurship. They are known as the "problem solving generation" and many want to feel as though they are part of the solution. Generation Y, which includes those born between 1981 and 1991, tend to give out of a sense of community. They want to feel connected to one another and to make a difference in their community and in their world (Wolfe, 2012). Understanding not only the mature and baby boomer generations but also the younger generations' motivations to give is imperative to an organization's lasting success in today's nonprofit world. Soon, the younger generation will comprise the majority of givers to nonprofit organizations.

Still, even once we are equipped with all of this knowledge, how can we possibly appeal to donors in all four generations? We can do this through what is called multichannel communications or content marketing. "Content marketing for nonprofit organizations is creating and sharing relevant and valuable content that attracts, motivates, engages and inspires your supporters to help you achieve your mission," (Miller, 2013, p 26). In content marketing, the same core content is distributed in various ways to appeal to the needs of different generations, so that they receive the information in a way that is meaningful to them. Content marketing allows us to peacefully merge the goals of the organization and the desires of the supporter population (Miller, 2013, p 26). "Generally, nonprofits that adopt multiple engagement channels have a more optimistic outlook on their ability to recruit new donors, retain existing donors and grow individual contributions in the coming year," (*Business Wire*,

2012). This is the key message in content marketing, a concept that successful nonprofits must embrace when moving forward in their efforts toward a modern communications plan.

Technological Changes

There is no doubt that technology has been improving and expanding at an exponential rate in the 21st century. Internet, laptops, social media, smart phones, tablets and iPads have made information instantly available 24 hours a day and have changed the face of how we communicate with one another. However, along with all of the positive exposure and awareness that technology can bring to nonprofits comes increasing expectations in the eyes of their supporters.

Today's donors expect relevance. They expect to see current, pertinent content when they visit an organization's website. People now expect to find answers to their questions immediately (Miller, 2013, p 11). Everything is in "real time." The same rule applies to content viewed on social media. If an organization's Facebook page has not posted any new content since 2011, the organization is often seen as not credible and certainly not relevant. In fact, some may even assume that the organization is no longer in operation. Surveys show us that the public has become intolerant of outdated information (Miller, 2013, p 12).

It is important to note that now more than ever before, potential donors are doing research on an organization before they decide to make a gift. A 2007 study showed that 65% of donors first researched a nonprofit online that they considered supporting before giving to them (Miller, 2013, p 8). By 2012, that number had increased to 83%. Where are these people looking? They are looking at the organization's website and at their social media presence. 46.1% of nonprofit donors in a 2012 survey said that the organization's website is the first thing they look at when discerning a nonprofit's credibility (Walter & Gioglio, 2014). For these reasons especially, organizations must make sure that their website is running correctly and is updated with relevant content at all times. This is yet another reason why modern communications plans are more important now than ever before.

Mobile technology has begun to rise in popularity rapidly over the last decade. Researchers believe that the spike in mobile technology use in communications is a result of our need to be constantly connected in a way that is convenient to us at every moment of every day (Miller, 2013, p 11). This stands in contrast to some older communication techniques such as direct mail that is only received once a day (and not on Sundays or national holidays) and at a time that is not decided by the receiver. People now want to be in control of their communications and mobile technology allows us to do just that. As of the end of 2013, thirty percent of nonprofit organizations had enabled their websites and email communications for mobile viewing while an estimated fifty percent of supporters and donors access these organization's sites and emails on mobile devices (Miller, 2013, p 11). Nonprofits must close this gap and keep up with the changing times if they are to survive and thrive in today's fast-paced convenience-driven mobile world. "Collectively, the rapid spread of these interactive technologies has dramatically increased organizations' abilities to communicate with, strategically .engage, and respond to their constituents," (Hackler & Saxton, 2007).

In sum, nonprofit communications have undergone some major changes in the last two decades. There has been a shift away from the sole use of outbound communications and a move toward a major focus on community engagement in marketing; we must also learn and adapt our communication techniques to appeal to the hearts of four different generations of supporters; and finally, we must adapt to the technological advances that are now occurring at an incredibly rapid rate. Keeping these changes in mind when crafting a modern communications plan will help ensure our success moving forward.

Part II

The Modern Nonprofit Communications Plan

The creation of a comprehensive nonprofit communications plan will prove very beneficial for any organization currently lacking a consistent plan for its marketing and communications endeavors as well as for those whose plans need to be updated. What follows is a step-by-step guide to the creation of such a plan for the MOD's Michigan chapter. By utilizing nonprofit benchmarks combined with research regarding best practices, I will lay out a guide for creating an effective and compelling communications plan for the chapter. First, however, it may be helpful to review a brief summary of the March of Dimes Foundation.

The March of Dimes

The March of Dimes Foundation is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is "to improve the health of babies by preventing prematurity, birth defects and infant mortality," (www.marchofdimes.com, 2014). Founded by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in January of 1938, the March of Dimes (MOD) has been in existence for 76 years and over the course of those years, has evolved into one of the largest and most renowned charities in the United States. With chapters in every state in the nation, MOD now employs a staff of over 1,800 and manages a budget of revenues and expenditures averaging \$220 million annually (www.guidestar.org, 2014). The Foundation is credited with numerous accomplishments such as the development of the Salk vaccine for the prevention of polio, the funding of life-saving medical treatments for premature babies and babies born with birth defects, and the leading of a now decade-long effort to raise the level of prematurity awareness among the general population. Millions of dollars are raised every year through the organization's premier fundraising event, March for Babies. Funds raised through March for Babies go toward the development of new treatments, the improvement of existing ones, and the provision of comfort and support to families who have experienced infant loss, those who have babies born with birth

defects, and those who have babies in neonatal intensive care units in hospitals throughout the United States.

MOD is a classic example of one of the many nonprofits that has an underfunded or, for some chapters, a non-existent communications budget. Although some chapters have the luxury of having a full-time communications employee on staff, many more must go without. In these chapters, marketing and communications tasks are typically assigned to the already busy fundraising staff members and, as a result, often are not implemented at all or in some cases, implemented haphazardly, without the potential effectiveness that is possible with a consistent communications strategy. The Michigan Chapter of MOD, in spite of having one of the nation's largest markets, does not have any staff positions dedicated to communications. Through this master's project, I have decided to use my research and the skills I have gained in the MPA program to create this communications manual that can be duplicated and distributed to each of the Michigan Chapter's eight division offices. This manual will provide each division with a communications timeline that will help volunteers and staff to streamline and consistently deliver meaningful messages to all stakeholders of the organization in the state of Michigan. While I unfortunately do not have the power to grant MOD's staff members more time or resources to carry these tasks out, my hope is that this will make it less burdensome to do so, and that much of the communications responsibilities can be given to interns and/or volunteers to implement, easing the strain on MOD's staff members.

Step One: Defining Goals and Objectives

As with any plan, it is always a good idea to first articulate our goals and objectives. Some common goals of nonprofit communications plans are 1) to increase community engagement, 2) to improve brand awareness, 3) to recruit new volunteers and donors, 4) to motivate more people to attend and sponsor events, 5) to increase website traffic, and 6) to grow the donor database (Miller, 2013, p 59). Many of these goals are tied into one another in some way. If we are engaging more people, we will most likely also be attracting and attaining

more volunteers and donors. These new volunteers and donors will in turn attend more events. The cycle of success begins and ends with one key word: *engagement*.

In an effort to craft successful goals for MOD's communications plan, I have recently discussed the current status of the MOD Michigan Chapter's communications program with MOD staff from various departments. We have agreed upon three broad goals for the communications plan: 1) increasing community engagement, 2) increasing volunteerism, and 3) increasing fundraising dollars. We must not stop here, however. These goals must be broken down into reachable and measurable objectives.

The following are the goals and objectives for the Michigan chapter's communications plan.

Step One Summary: MOD Communications Plan Goals and Objectives

Goal # 1) To increase community engagement

Objectives:

- a) Use social media to increase Facebook and Twitter followers by 20% in 2015.
- b) Increase our level of social media interactions by at least 15% in 2015.
- c) Attain and utilize real, local stories of mission affected families using visual storytelling throughout calendar year 2015.
- d) Implement the social media initiative 'behind the scenes at MOD' to connect more with supporters on a relational level displaying a high level of authenticity.

Goal # 2) To increase volunteerism

Objectives:

- a) Recruit at least two social media volunteers in the Michigan Chapter, each pledging to devote at least three hours a week to engaging with our supporters on social media.
- b) Use specific and understandable calls to action in volunteer recruitment

Goal # 3) To increase fundraising dollars

Objectives:

- a) Follow the story of a premature baby who is currently in the NICU through the course of calendar year 2015. Celebrate with a call to action each time the baby reaches a milestone; inspiring donors to give, measure gifts coming in on or soon after milestone days. Ensure privacy (HIPPA) laws are always followed throughout this process.

- b) Increase the efficiency and quality of our follow-up communications and recognition, ensuring that volunteer thank-you letters are sent within one week of the volunteer's service date and personalized if time allows.
- c) At least once a quarter, share new information through email and social media regarding how supporters' money is being used with an increased focus on how dollars are being used at the local level (Michigan and division level), including photos whenever possible.

Our goals and objectives will help shape our communications strategy and content to maximize our chances of success moving ahead. Now that we have set our goals and objectives, the next step in the creation of a modern communication plan is to identify and learn about our organization's stakeholders.

Step Two: Identifying a Diverse Range of Stakeholders

As discussed earlier, it is critical to know and understand our current and potential supporters in order to create a plan that is customized to suit their interests and needs. In the case of MOD, stakeholders include families affected by prematurity, birth defects and infant mortality, MOD staff and volunteers, board members, members of the medical community and local, state and national politicians who are influential in the passage of laws regarding maternal and infant health. Since many of our stakeholders are of childbearing age, it is important to note that our supporters are made up of a larger portion of Generation X and Generation Y members than the portion representing the general population. Given what we know about these generations, we can tailor a larger portion of our content (and especially our online and social media content) to appeal to those who give out of a sense of entrepreneurship and out of community.

When identifying and learning about our stakeholders, we must also take diversity into account. The foundation is comprised of stakeholders of various ethnic backgrounds and consists of a substantial amount of Hispanic and African American stakeholders. At the national level, MOD does a great job of tailoring its content with diversity in mind. For instance, one of the national MOD websites, www.nacersano.org, is written entirely in Spanish. In

addition, much of the Foundation's publications including its photos and videos include families of diverse ethnic backgrounds (www.marchofdimess.com, 2014). This is especially pertinent because one of MOD's major initiatives involves reducing racial disparities in premature birth rates. We must therefore make sure we remain consistent with national level communications and publications in appealing to families of various races and ethnicities. Effort will be placed into ensuring that these diverse communications are distributed at both the state and community levels.

Step Two Summary: Identifying a Diverse Range of Stakeholders

A *stakeholder* is defined as someone who has an interest or concern in an organization's work (www.m-w.com, 2014).

MOD's Stakeholders:

- Moms
- Babies
- Families
- Families affected by prematurity, birth defects and/or infant mortality
- Doctors, Nurses
- Pediatricians
- Specialists
- Other Medical Staff
- MOD Staff
- Volunteers
- Sponsors
- Donors
- Walkers-Event-goers
- Advocates
- Politicians, Lawmakers
- Local, State and National Leaders
- Researchers
- Other nonprofits/competitors

Ages:

- Larger percentage of child-bearing age (generally speaking, women in their 20s and 30s, although technically can vary greatly from this)
- More Gen X and Gen Y

Diverse:

- Hispanic
- African American
- Caucasian
- Multi-Racial

We must keep our stakeholders in mind when designing and distributing our content. We must always ask ourselves, *"What will be most effective to those we are looking to reach?"* Answering this question can help us to determine what type of communication should be used.

Step Three: Creating a Timeline

Once the goals and objectives are set and all stakeholders are identified, creating a broad timeline for a nonprofit communications plan is recommended. Different time spans work best for different organizations, but a calendar year is most commonly used (Miller, 2013, p 140). When sketching out the timeline, one section can be dedicated to each month. This can be done on a large dry erase board or poster board. Then, once final changes are made, they can be transferred into an electronic format for saving and sharing with others within the organization. Once one section is mapped out for each month, the next step is to mark down on the timeline when the nonprofit's major events and holidays occur. These holidays, fundraisers and seasonal events all have an impact on the organization's communications (Miller, 2013, p 142). When doing this, we should always keep a donor-centered approach, meaning that we should always consider what will be important to donors first and foremost. Oftentimes, "what nonprofits think is important is not what donors feel is important," (Miller, 2013, p 16). When we are successful at doing this, we will often find that when supporters are motivated to act on behalf of the organization, our own goals and objectives will be much easier to achieve.

After adding in major holidays and events, we can see when there are areas of time when there is less going on and use these times to fill in some other important themes and topics that we want to share with our supporters and that we feel will have a positive impact on community engagement.

In the case of MOD, our broad timeline for calendar year 2015 would include:

- Anniversary of MOD Founding (January)
- National Birth Defects Prevention Month (January)
- Folic Acid Awareness Week (January)
- March for Babies (MFB) Campaign (January through May)
- FDR's Birthday (January)
- Valentine's Day (February)
- MFB Events (April and May)
- Mother's Day (May)
- Memorial Day (May)
- Father's Day (June)
- Independence Day (July)
- Golf Events (August)
- Back to School (September)
- National Hispanic Heritage Month (mid-September through mid-October)
- Infant Loss Remembrance Day (October)
- Chefs Events (October and November)
- Prematurity Awareness Month (November)
- World Prematurity Day (November)
- Thanksgiving (November)
- Giving Tuesday (December)
- Holidays (December)
- End-of-year/Annual Giving (December)

Adding in special themes: For the purposes of increasing awareness and community engagement, the following will be added to our annual timeline:

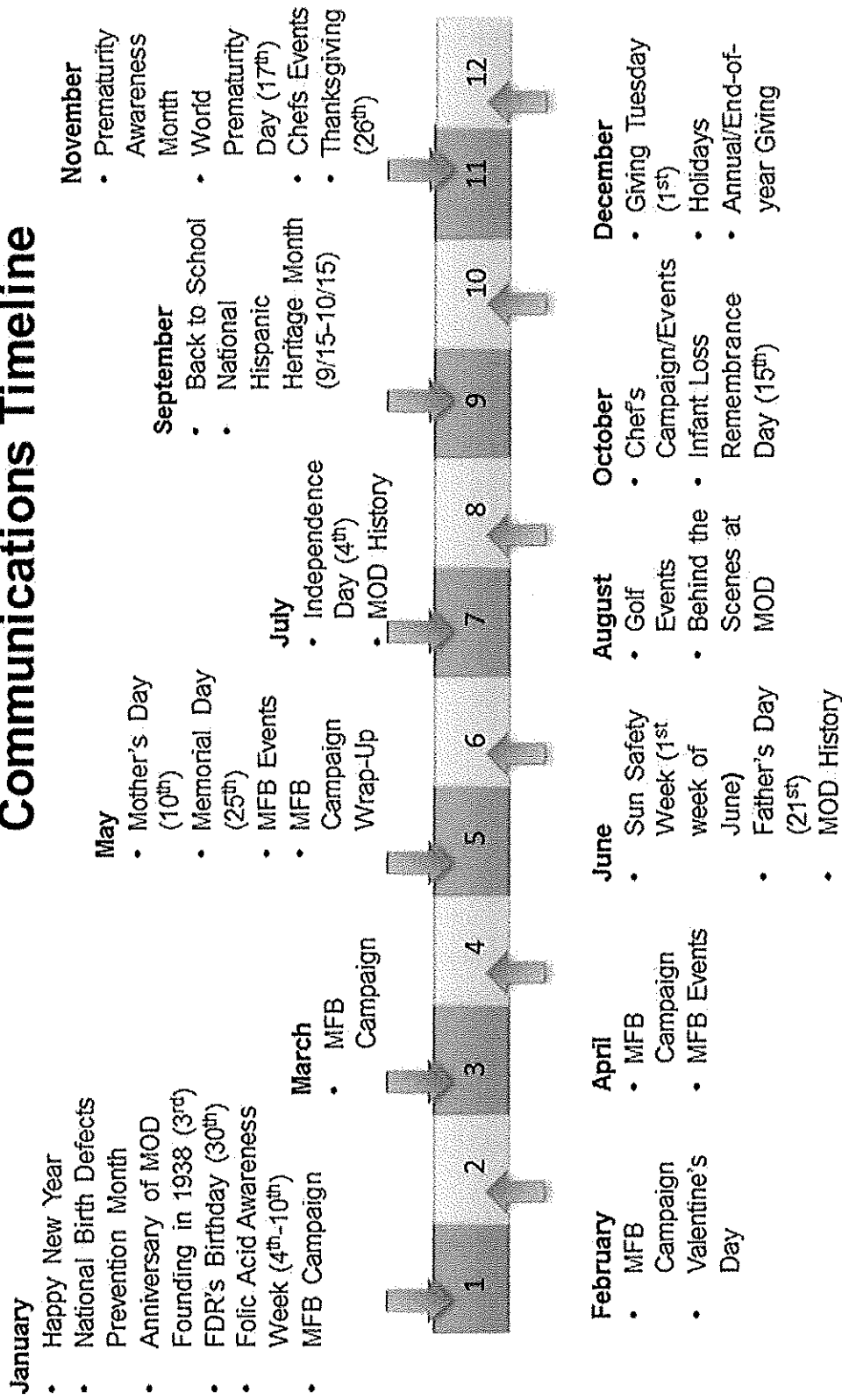
- MOD History (June and July)
- Behind the Scenes at MOD (August)

Step Three Summary: Recommendations for Creating a Timeline

- One section for each month
- Include important dates, events and holidays.
- Add in special themes to increase awareness and community engagement.
- First, draft the timeline on a large board. Then, transfer final draft to an electronic source for saving and sharing.
- Include others in this process to gain valuable feedback and varying perspectives

March of Dimes Michigan Chapter

Communications Timeline



2015

Step Four: Finding Our Voice and Brand

An organization's *voice* can be explained as "the perspective from which you speak; the core relationship that you have, or want to establish, with the people on the receiving end of your communications," (Miller, 2013, p 102). Establishing and maintaining a consistent voice is important to nonprofit communications in order to build trust and understanding among stakeholders. Our voice defines how our organization is perceived. Strange as it may sound, a helpful way to understand the concept of voice in nonprofit communications is to think of the organization as a human being and then examine the characteristics that the human's personality would have (Walter & Gioglio, 2014).

An organization's *brand* is the sum total of how the public feels about a particular organization. It is the emotional response that people have when interacting with or seeing things about your organization. (www.thenon-profittoolbox.com, 2014).

The Voice and Brand of MOD

When it comes to MOD, on a national level, there are some major guidelines given as far as the foundation's voice and branding. Following these national guidelines in all of Michigan's communications will help maximize the positive effects of our communications efforts through providing content and messaging that is consistent in style and tone to other messages our stakeholders may be receiving from the national level.

The *voice* of the MOD brand is "a promise to moms, babies and families. Our brand personality is caring, compassionate, supportive, relevant, trustworthy and inspiring," (www.dimension.marchofdimes.com, 2014).

Using our voice consistently will help ensure that our organization stands apart from others and is easily recognizable to a wide variety of people.

Step Four Summary: Finding Our Voice and Brand

Primary characteristics of the MOD brand:

- Caring
- Compassionate
- Supportive
- Trustworthy
- Inspiring

Imagine the March of Dimes not as a brand, but as a person. As “Mom’s caring friend,” we are concerned, but not judgmental. We are an expert, but haven’t lost our curiosity, or our optimism. We are supportive and compassionate. Our brand voice embodies all of these values and is how we communicate with the world. Just like our visual brand, our voice is unique. It should make others instantly say: “That’s the March of Dimes.” It’s important to use our brand voice for every piece of communication, even when the audience is different.

(www.dimension.marchofdimes.com, 2014).

Step Four in Action: Our Voice and Brand Put to Use

Boiler plate:

The boilerplate should be used at the end of all news releases to communicate our mission and provide instructions for people to explore more.

“The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide, the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org. Find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.”

(www.dimension.marchofdimes.com, 2014)

Mission Statement:

To improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality

Supporting Statement:

About 4 million babies were born in the United States last year, and the March of Dimes helped each and every one through research, education, vaccines and breakthroughs.

Vision Statement:

To see the day that all babies are born healthy

Slogan:

Working together for stronger, healthier babies

Elevator Speech:

An organization's *elevator speech* is a short summary used to quickly and simply define an organization and its purpose (www.forbes.com, 2014).

Suggested MOD Elevator Speech: *"We improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality and we help moms have full-term pregnancies. If something goes wrong, we offer information and support to our local families. We do all of these things though funding life-saving research both locally and nationally, community service through our NICU Family Support Program, education and advocacy to save babies' lives, both in (division) area and across the country."*

Suggested MOD Elevator Speech, short version: *"The March of Dimes helps moms have full-term pregnancies and healthy babies. And if something goes wrong, we offer information and comfort to families. We research the problems that threaten our babies and work on preventing them,"* (www.dimension.marchofdimes.com, 2014).

Suggested MFB Elevator Speech: *"March for babies is America's premier walk event and has been held every year since 1970. March for Babies is held in 900 communities across the United States and involves more than 7 million people each year. When you participate in March for Babies, you're helping real families in our community while partnering with the March of Dimes to combat one of the largest threats to children's health today. Last year, we invested more than \$167 million in educational programs, scientific research and community outreach initiatives."*

MOD National Brand Guidelines:

typography

The March of Dimes type family consists of three fonts for print use: VAG bold, Avenir and Sabon MT. These fonts are available in a variety of weights. Verdana Regular is the standard typeface for online and digital use.

abc

vag rounded lt bold

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

abc

Avenir LT

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

abc

Sabon MT

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

* Use Vag bold in all lower case for headlines.

* Add a swoop to the lowercase "j" in vag bold.

color palette

Purple is the primary March of Dimes color. We use two shades: grape and frosting. These also are used in our logo and mom & baby symbol. Individual programs and events often have a specific secondary color associated with them. The secondary palette also can be used for accent colors. In most cases, these colors should not be applied as large fields.

Primary colors



Pantone® 2583
C=46% M=63%
R=156 G=95 B=181
Hex #9C5FB5



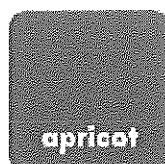
Pantone® 2563
C=25% M=35%
R=205 G=173 B=217
HEX #CDADD9

- * Always use these colors or tints of these colors.
- * Text should be 100% of color to ensure readability.
- * Tints should be used as background or accent colors.
- * When frosting can't be used, use a 50% tint of grape.

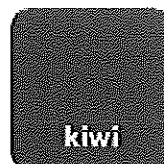
Secondary colors



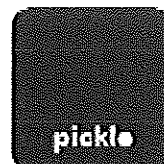
Pantone® 674
C=11% M=67%
R=216 G=116 B=174
HEX #D974AE



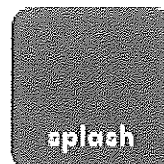
Pantone® 144
M=52% Y=100%
R=237 G=109 B=59
HEX #ED6D3B



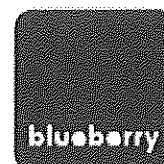
Pantone® 360
C=55% Y=100%
R=80 G=166 B=24
HEX #58A618



Pantone® 339
C=84% Y=54%
R=0 G=181 B=136
HEX #37A47E



Pantone® 3115
C=57% Y=16%
R=0 G=191 B=215
HEX #00BABE



Pantone® 2925
C=94% M=21%
R=0 G=148 B=181
HEX #0094B5

National MOD Brand Guidelines:

Our design elements

- Using these elements consistently helps to define our brand:

headline here

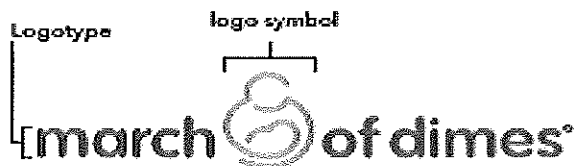
place copy here for
headlines and callouts



march  of dimes®

logo

Our logo with its mom & baby symbol is the primary representation of our brand. The color of our logo and the placement and size relation of the logo symbol have been carefully considered and should not be altered. The minimum size of the logo is 1 inch.



- The logo uses grape (Pantone® 2583), and the symbol uses frosting (Pantone® 2563).
- Use the logo in purple wherever possible.

march  of dimes®

- The logo can be printed in black (logo 100% and symbol 60%).
- Only use the black logo for black-and-white work.



- Always give the logo some breathing room.

march  of dimes®

- The logo also can be knocked out of a solid color to white.

MOD National Brand Guidelines:

WEB COLORS



Color Equivalents:
Pantone: PMS2583



Color Equivalents:
Pantone: PMS674



Color Equivalents:
Pantone: PMS2925



Color Equivalents:
Pantone: PMS339



Color Equivalents:
Pantone: PMS359

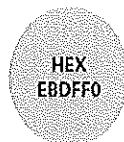


Color Equivalents:
Pantone: PMS1375



Color Equivalents:
Pantone: PMS168

WEB COLOR TINTS



Step Five: Selecting Our Communications Methods

Next, when preparing a communications plan, we should decide which communications methods we will be utilizing in our efforts. It is important to take everything we have covered so far into account when making these decisions. Our communications methods can affect the achievement of our goals and objectives, should take into consideration the characteristics and preferences of our stakeholders, and should be consistent with our voice and branding.

An important topic to consider when creating our communications pieces is the frequency at which we will ask donors to make a monetary donation. Is there a magic number? According to recent research, "Donors do not define over-solicitation as a certain number of asks per year, but rather as being asked to give again before learning what happened with their previous donation. If donors receive information about results created by their last gift before being asked again, a higher quantity of asks does not feel unreasonable," (Miller, 2013, p 192). This information was used when developing the goals and objectives for this plan. As listed earlier, one of our objectives is to share new information through email and social media regarding how supporters' money is being used with an increased focus on how dollars are being used at the local level (Michigan and division levels), including photos whenever possible. Another related objective is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our follow-up communications. When implementing all state and division level communications, we need to make sure that we are consistently informing our donors of where their money is going. This is more important to donors than having a certain frequency of asks per quarter or per year, and what is most important to our donors must also be what is most important to us; that is, if we want to be successful!

Communications Channels

There are a multitude of choices when it comes to communications channels that nonprofits can use to communicate with their stakeholders. However, we must take our available resources into consideration when deciding which of these channels will be utilized in MOD's Michigan chapter. Reviewing some recent findings regarding what other nonprofits of similar size are doing and what nonprofit supporters generally find to be most important can help in our efforts. Since communications resources are limited, this may help narrow down the many choices we have in communications techniques to a list of several methods that can be realistically implemented, given lack of communications staff and very limited time.

The following chart is taken from the *'2013 Nonprofit Trends Report'* and shows us the importance of various communications channels to nonprofit organizations of all types. (Miller, 2013).

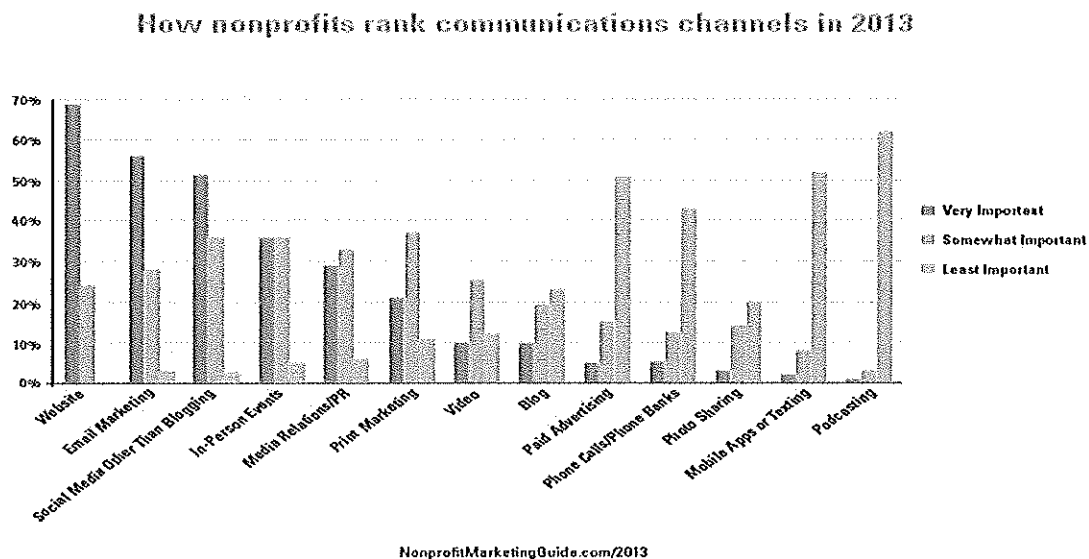


Figure 1-How nonprofits rank communications channels in 2013.

Keeping this research as well as our limited resources in mind, our 2015 communications plan for MOD's Michigan chapter will utilize the following major methods of communication:

1. Website
2. Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
3. Email
4. Direct Mail

Research Based Recommendations for Communications Channels:

1. Website (www.marchofdimes.com/michigan)

- Offer a clear call to action. What can viewers do today to help?
- Feature Michigan families, local stories
- Include family testimonials, how MOD has helped them
- Should be mobile-friendly
- Add info on staff. Puts faces to names. Feature new staff members on site. This helps new staff feel included and helps others get to know them. This way, donors are not seeing their name for the first time on a solicitation letter.
- Offer offline ways to connect. (Site already does this well. Continue to include updated office addresses and phone numbers. Perhaps add a phone directory including all staff).
- Should include keywords-find ways to work important words into the text of the website. Think of what people would be typing into a search engine if they were mission connected but did not know of MOD.

Some suggestions:

pregnancy, prematurity, NICU, birth defects, infant health, family support, infant mortality/loss, pre-eclampsia, twins, triplets, multiples.

2. Social Media

As stated earlier, social media is taking over the nonprofit world at a rapid pace. For this reason, I have chosen to go more in-depth with this communications channel to offer some tangible materials including text and photos that can be used on MOD's social media channels in an effort to increase engagement levels. The vast majority of the text in these posts is original and written by me personally; however, the majority of the photos have come from the national office for our use. I have combined these in a way that will allow for the easy and efficient use of both text and photos on our social media platforms.

- Use photos whenever possible.
- Be positive.
- Use visual storytelling (examples included).
- Ask questions.
- Do not delete negative comments, but do respond to the person's concerns in a respectful way.
- Follow back your followers. They like it.
- Retweet followers' posts, especially those that mention MOD.

3. Email

Monthly email is the most common frequency with which email is used in nonprofits, and newsletters are the most common use of email (Miller, 2013, p 197).

- Use a conversational tone
- Make it mobile-friendly by using mostly text
- Include a call to action
- Be short and concise

4. Direct Mail

Quarterly is the most common frequency with which nonprofits utilize direct mail, followed by twice a year (Miller, 2013, p 197).

- Personalize whenever possible
- Utilize mainly for thank-you notes, more than for solicitation purposes

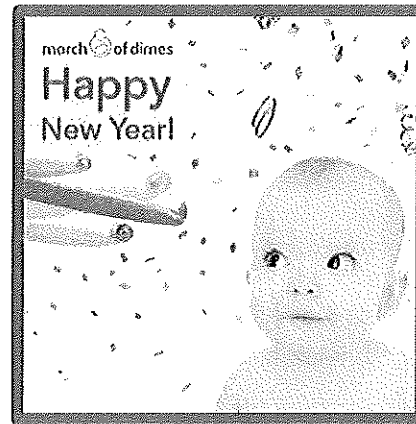
Step Six- Working The Plan

Despite being a former MOD employee and dedicated volunteer, it would be impossible for me to craft every single communication coming from the entire state for an entire year within the confines of this master's project. Therefore, as stated above, what follows is a social media content plan for calendar year 2015.

January

Happy New Year post →

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month



Suggested Social Media Posts

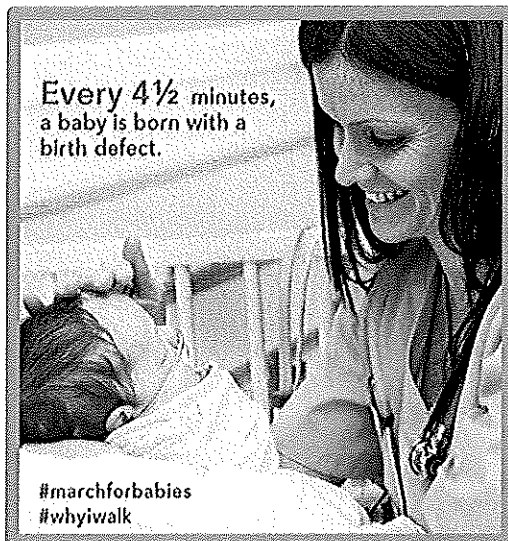
Birth defects are health conditions that are present at birth. Birth defects change the shape or function of one or more parts of the body. They can cause problems in overall health, how the body develops, or in how the body works.

Babies born with birth defects have a greater chance of illness and long-term disability than babies born without birth defects.

The severity of birth defects varies. Some birth defects can be treated, which improves quality of life, while others are more severe and cannot be treated.

Some of the most common birth defects are:

- Heart defects: Affects as many as 1 in 100 babies in the United States.
- Cleft lip/palate: Affected babies (1 in 700) can have problems with eating, speech and language. One or multiple surgeries are required to correct the cleft lip/palate, depending on the severity.
- Down syndrome: This is a chromosomal abnormality that affects 1 in 800 babies.
- Spina bifida (open spine): Affected babies (1 in 2,500) have varying degrees of paralysis and bladder and bowel problems.



Birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality, accounting for one in five infant deaths in the United States.

There are three types of genetic birth defects:

1. Single-gene defects: Children get half of their genes from each parent. A genetic disease can be inherited if a parent passes along a single faulty gene. Other diseases

can be inherited if both parents carry an abnormality in the same gene and pass it on to their child.

2. Chromosomal birth defects: Abnormalities in the number or structure of chromosomes can cause many birth defects. Because of an error during the development of an egg or sperm cell, a baby can be born with too few or too many chromosomes, or with one or more that is broken or rearranged.
3. Multifactorial birth defects: Some birth defects are caused by a combination of genes and environmental factors. A child may inherit one or more genes that cause him to have a birth defect if exposed to an environmental factor, such as cigarette smoke.

Each year in the United States, about three thousand pregnancies are affected with birth defects of the brain and spinal cord.

About every four-and-a-half minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States.

Up to 70% of neural tube defects-birth defects of the brain and spinal cord-may be prevented if women consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily, prior to and during the early weeks of conception.

Birth defects affect one in every thirty-three babies born in the United States.

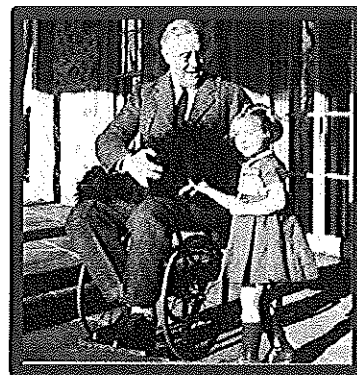
Here are some things you can do to help prevent birth defects:

- Consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily
- Manage chronic maternal diseases such as diabetes, seizure disorders or phenylketonuria (PKU).
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Talk to a health care provider about medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Avoid alcohol, smoking and illicit drugs.
- See a health care provider regularly.
- Avoid toxic substances at home and at work.
- Ensure protection against domestic violence.
- Know your family history and seek genetic counseling if appropriate.

For more information about birth defects:

- <http://www.marchofdimes.com/baby/birthdefects.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects>

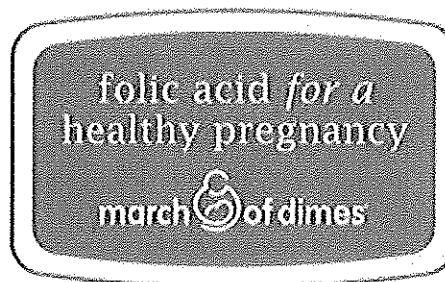
MOD Anniversary January 3-Founding Day. Seventy-seven years ago, on this day in 1938, the March of Dimes was founded by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



FDR's Birthday January 30-Today, we say Happy Birthday to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, founder of the March of Dimes. President Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882.

Folic Acid Awareness Week January 4-10, 2015

Folic acid is a B vitamin. Our bodies use it to make new cells. Everyone needs folic acid.



Folic acid comes in two forms:

- Folate, which is naturally found in certain fruits, vegetables and meats.
- Folic acid, which is synthetic and is added to enriched grain products like pasta, bread and cereal.

It is recommended that women consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily.

Up to 70% of neural tube defects may be prevented if women consume this amount of folic acid daily, prior to and during the early weeks of conception.

The best way to get the daily recommended amount of folic acid is to take a multivitamin with 400 mcg of folic acid and to eat healthy foods. During pregnancy, a woman should take a prenatal vitamin containing 600 mcg of folic acid.

Folic acid information:

- <http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/folicacid.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/folicacid>

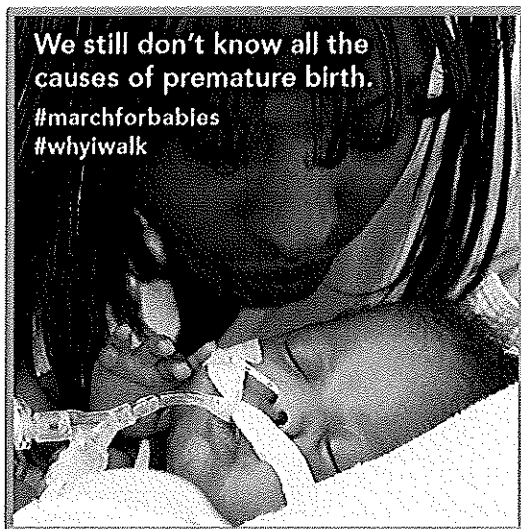
Good Sources of Folic Acid and Folate			
Food	Serving Size	Micrograms	Percent Daily Value *
Asparagus cooked	1/2 cup	134	34
Beef liver, cooked	3.5 ounces	260	65
Black beans, cooked	1/2 cup	128	32
Breakfast cereals	1/2 to 1 1/2 cups	100 to 400	25 to 100
Broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	54	21
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1/2 cup	78	20
Chicken liver, cooked	3.5 ounces	578	145
Chickpeas, cooked	1/2 cup	141	35
Kidney beans, cooked	1/2 cup	115	29
Lentils, cooked	1/2 cup	179	45
Lima beans, cooked	1/2 cup	78	20
Orange	1 whole orange	39	10
Orange juice (not from concentrate)	1 cup	74	19
Pasta, enriched, cooked	4 ounces	73	18
Spinach, cooked	1/2 cup	131	33
Tomato juice	1 cup	49	12
Wheat germ	1/4 cup	81	20
White bread, enriched	1 slice	28	7
White rice, enriched, cooked	1/2 cup	64	16

* Nutrition information is derived from the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, and percent daily value is based on consumption of 400 mcg of folic acid.

(www.dimension.marchofdimes.com, 2014)

January Intro to March for Babies Campaign

- It's not too early to start thinking spring! Or to start thinking about marching for babies! Visit www.marchforbabies.org today! Why do YOU walk? #whyiwalk #marchforbabies



February

March for Babies campaign

Mission Mondays for February:

Week One: The mission of the March of Dimes is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

Week Two: A March of Dimes goal is to decrease the preterm birth rate to 9.6% by the year 2020.

Week Three: What if the hardest day of your life was also your first? This is true for thousands of babies every day who are born too soon or very sick. This is why we do what we do.

Week Four: The March of Dimes helps healthy babies too! Dr. Virginia Apgar, March of Dimes researcher, developed the APGAR score to quickly assess a newborn's status.



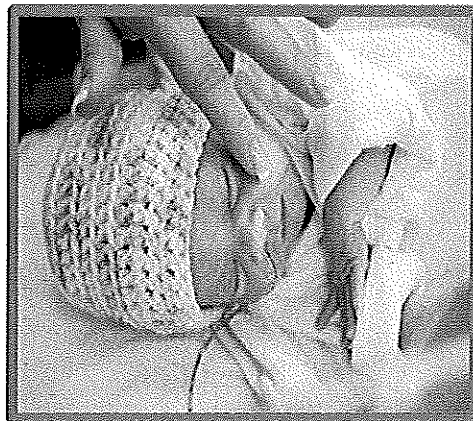
Company Team Tuesdays for February:

Each Tuesday now through MFB, post a few sentences featuring a company team and share what they're currently doing to raise money. Include a picture of this team in action (holding a fundraising event or just a group shot of some of their employees) whenever possible. As an alternative, you can also post a picture of their company logo along with this post.

Walker Wednesdays for February:

Week One: 'Like' this status if you've signed up for March for Babies! Still need to sign up? No problem! Visit www.marchforbabies.org today!

Week Two-Did you know that March for Babies has a Facebook application where you can send messages, fundraise, and more? Visit the app on Facebook and login with your March for Babies information. If you haven't created an account, you can also do that on the app! March for Babies is gearing up - now is the time to register and start your teams! The March for Babies Facebook app is an easy way to get started. Click [here](#) to check it out!



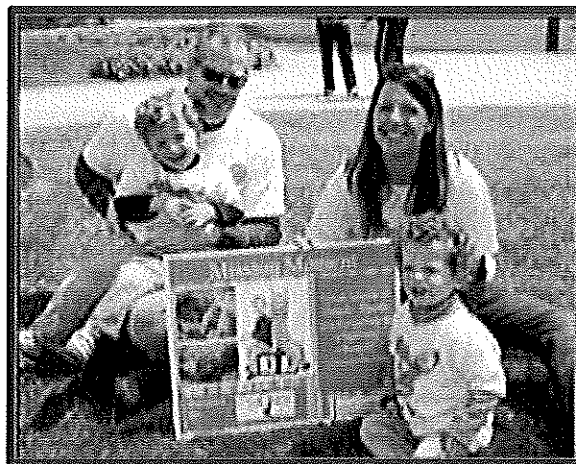
Week Three- Walkers, increase your fundraising totals by including a March for Babies badge in your email signature. Log in at www.marchforbabies.org to set yours up!

Week Four-Walkers, did you know that those who fundraise online make an average of three times more than those who do not? Maximize your success by utilizing email and social media in your fundraising efforts this year!

Family Team Thursdays for February:

Week One-March for Babies Family Teams, now is the time to set up your team page and assemble your core team! The Family Teams page is packed with ideas and tips for a successful walk. Check it out at www.marchforbabies.org/familyteams

Week Two-Meet Family Team 'Super Guginos'! "Team Super Guginos is honored to join you in the fight for stronger, healthier babies! Our team has walked in the March for Babies every year since our twin boys, Alex and Levi, came home from the NICU. Thanks to work of the March of Dimes, our former 2lb preemies are growing up to be big and strong! We walk as our way of thanking



the many who have walked this path before us and whose support made all the difference for our family. We walk because no baby should have to endure the tubes, pokes, wires, and procedures that NICU babies endure every day. We walk to support families who spend days and nights at hospitals not knowing their baby's future. We walk for the hope of happier, healthier, stronger babies. Thank you to the March of Dimes for fighting this fight and thank you for joining us in the 2015 March for Babies!"~ Laura Hurst, Team Super Guginos

Week Three-We are so thankful for our Family Teams! What family team are you on, who do you walk for, and where will you be walking this year? Comment to give a shout out to your team!

Week Four-Family teams, now is the perfect time for online fundraising! Share your team page on Facebook, email, Twitter, and anywhere else you can think of! Want some help? We've got you covered! Simply comment "feature me" on this post and we will feature your team right here on our page! As always, thank you for your support!



Fundraising Fridays for February:

Week One -It's fundraising Friday! March for Babies teams, setting a walker and dollar goal can help you increase your success! For company teams, aim to get at least 20% of the staff involved in raising money. \$200 is a reachable goal per

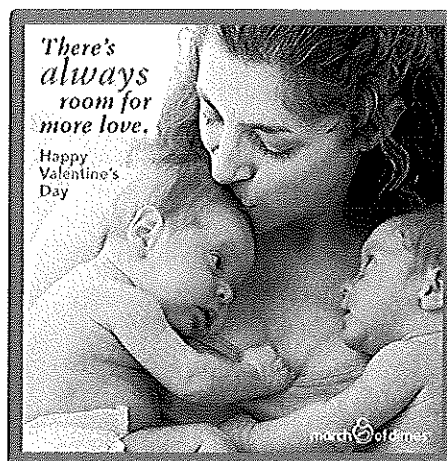
walker. Thank you for all you do for Michigan's babies and families!

Week Two- Happy Fundraising Friday! Signing up your team, communicating with team members and monitoring your team's progress is easy to do online. At www.marchforbabies.org, you'll find everything you need to help your team succeed. Do you have any great fundraising tips to share?

Week Three-March for Babies is about more than doing good. It's also about honoring the babies who mean so much to us. Sharing your personal story, your motivation for dedicating so many hours to help babies and families you have not met, is the best way to encourage others to join or support you.

Week Four-It's Fundraising Friday! A great and fun way to increase your funds raised this year is to create and share a video montage. There are websites where you can do this easily and free of charge by simply uploading your photos. People love to see true stories about how their dollars are making a difference.

Valentine's Day Post February 14th →



March

March for Babies campaign

Mission Mondays for March:

Week One-You've been touched by the March of Dimes if you've enjoyed vitamin enriched breads or pastas.

Week Two-The March of Dimes website, www.marchofdimes.com, provides a wealth of information on pregnancy and baby care.

Week Three-In 2013,----->

Week Four-The average first-year medical costs are about ten times greater for preterm infants than for full-term infants.

Week Five- You've been touched by the March of Dimes if you know that folic acid is important before and during pregnancy.

Corporate Team Tuesdays for March:

Each Tuesday now through MFB, post a few sentences featuring a company team and share what they're currently doing to raise money. Include a picture of this team in action (holding a fundraising event or just a group shot of some of their employees) whenever possible. As an alternative, you can also post a picture of their company logo along with this post.

Walker Wednesdays for March:

Week One-Walkers, did you know that we have a free March for Babies app for you to download? It's now available on both iPhone and Android! Check on your donations, send emails, get news and event details all right from your phone! Search for 'March for Babies' in your app store and you'll see this picture. →



Week Two-Walkers, a great way to raise funds is by putting up a notice advertising your efforts at your children's school, place of worship, or other organization you belong to (with their permission, of course)!

Week Three-Are you looking for a March for Babies event near you? We've got you covered! Just head on over to www.marchforbabies.org and type in your zip code. We'll find the walk closest to you.



Weeks Four and Five-Each Wednesday from this point forward through walk weekend, post the top five or ten walkers for Michigan, using the template shown here. The template can be found on the MOD share drive in 'Michigan Chapter Communications Plan.' The file is titled 'top walker template. Each week, post the top five or ten walkers for Michigan, using the template shown here. The template can be found on the MOD share drive in 'Michigan Chapter Communications Plan'. The file is titled 'top walker template.' ----→



Suggested texts with post-

Congratulations to the current top five walkers in the state of Michigan! Thank you for all you do for stronger, healthier babies!

Congratulations to the current top ten walkers in the state of Michigan! You are making a difference in the lives of Michigan's babies and families!

Family Team Thursdays for March:

Each Thursday in March and April, you may use this template →

(available on the share drive) to update the top ten family team list. Save the file in jpg format and post the current top ten list each Thursday.

Suggested text: Thank you to ALL of our Michigan family teams for all you do for stronger, healthier babies!

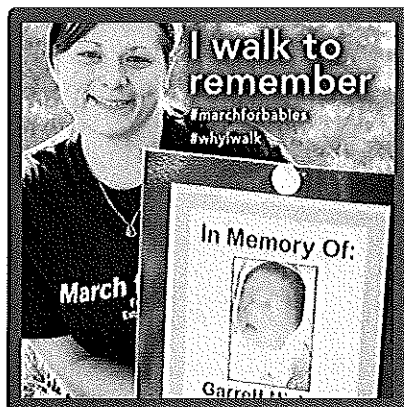
Fundraising Fridays for March:



Week One-Fundraising Friday tip! Ask to be placed on the agenda of an organization or church where you belong to talk about your experience and to ask for donations or invite attendees to join your team. If the group has the policy of supporting community efforts, perhaps they will rally around your cause and select the March of Dimes to be their project for a month!

Week Two-Fundraising Friday tip! Contact the hospital where your child was born to see if they can help you raise money or if they will post flyers about supporting your team.

Week Three-It's Fundraising Friday! 'Like' this if you've taken the Be Your Best for Babies challenge this year and are on track to surpass your personal March for Babies fundraising goal!



Week Four-It's Fundraising Friday! Make sure all your supporters know why you walk! Why do YOU walk?

April

March for Babies campaign

Mission Mondays for April

Week One- Every year, more than half million babies are born too soon in the United States and 13 million worldwide.

Week Two- The March of Dimes has open research grants in over 127 areas including cancer, diabetes, autism and even Parkinson's disease.



Week Three- The March of Dimes Michigan Chapter thanks YOU for helping us accomplish our mission of improving the health of Michigan's babies.



Week Four- Like this status if you marched for babies over the weekend! You made a difference!

Corporate Team Tuesdays for April-

Each Tuesday now through MFB, post a few sentences featuring a company team and share what they're currently doing to raise money. Include a picture of this team in action (holding a fundraising event or just a group shot of some of their employees) whenever possible. As an alternative, you can also post a picture of their company logo along with this post.

Walker Wednesdays for April

Each week on Wednesday, post the top five-ten walkers for Michigan, using the template shown here →
The template can be found on the MOD share drive in 'Michigan Chapter Communications Plan.' The file is titled 'top walker template.'

Suggested texts with post-

Congratulations to the current top five walkers in the state of Michigan! Thank you for all you do for stronger, healthier babies!

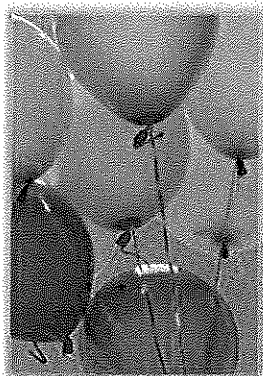
Congratulations to the current top ten walkers in the state of Michigan! You are making a difference in the lives of Michigan's babies and families!

Family Team Thursdays for April:

Each Thursday in April, you may use this template →
(available on the share drive) to update the top ten family team list. Save the file in jpg format and post the current top ten list each Thursday.

Suggested text: Thank you to ALL of our Michigan family teams for all you do for stronger, healthier babies!

Fundraising Fridays for April:



Week One-
Fundraising

Friday tip! Have a party and let your family and friends get together to celebrate your team. This is a great way to not only recruit donors, but also new walkers for your team! Party it up!

Week Two: Fundraising Friday tip! Spring cleaning! Hold a garage sale and donate sales to your march for babies team! Have the kids set up a 'lemonade stand for healthier babies'!

Week Three: Fundraising Friday tip! Find out if your employer has a matching gift program and if so, submit a matching gift request! You can easily double your donations by doing this!

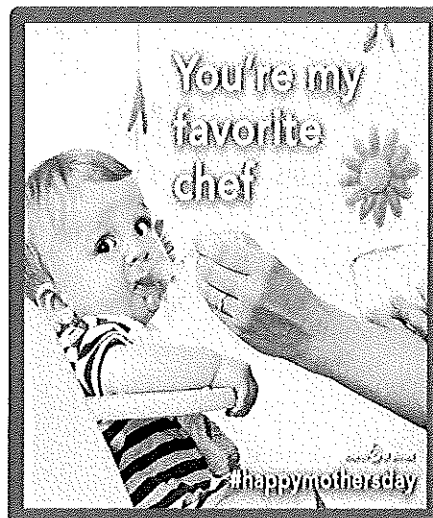
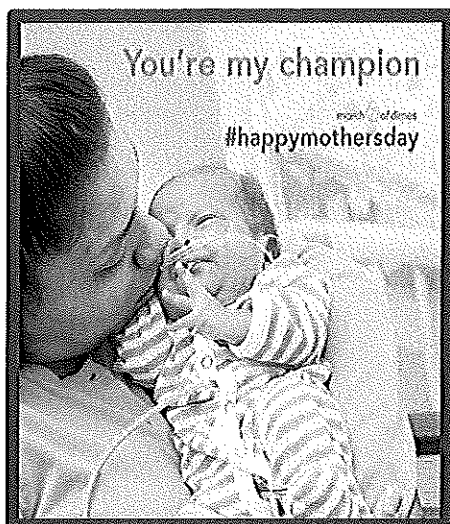
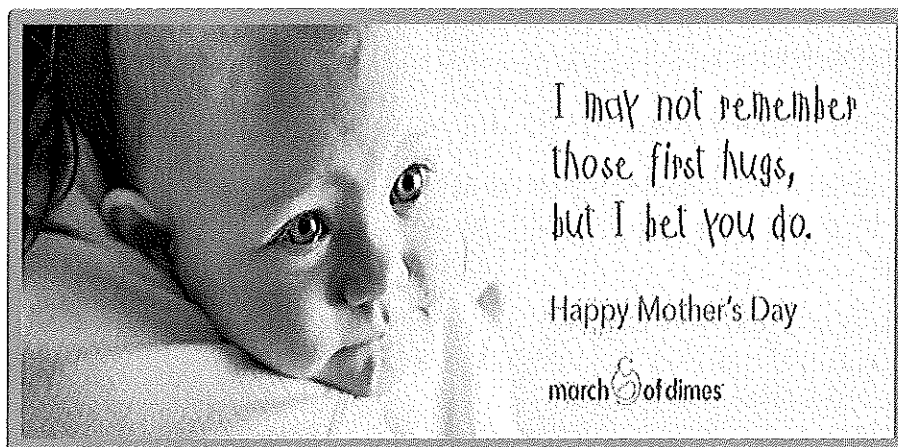
Week Four-Happy Fundraising Friday! We are in the final stretch of March for Babies fundraising! Thank you for all that you do for stronger, healthier babies.



May

Mother's Day

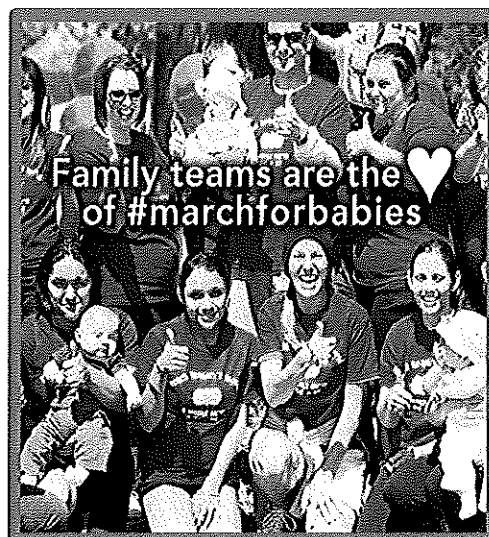
Celebrating
moms through
visual
storytelling...



March for Babies Campaign

Results-Post MFB results for each walk site including dollars raised, highlights of the event and pictures.

Thank you post to family teams →





← Memorial Day post

On this Memorial Day, the March of Dimes remembers and gives thanks to all those who gave their lives for our freedom.

June

Sun Safety Week-first week of June

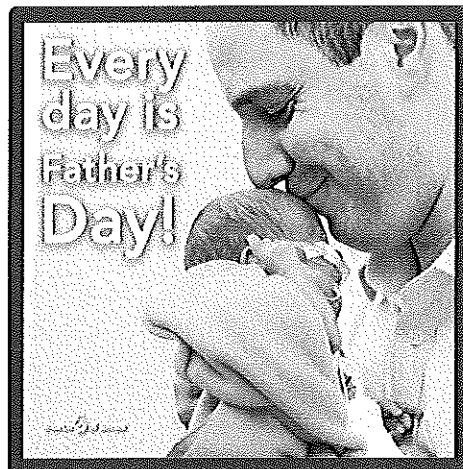
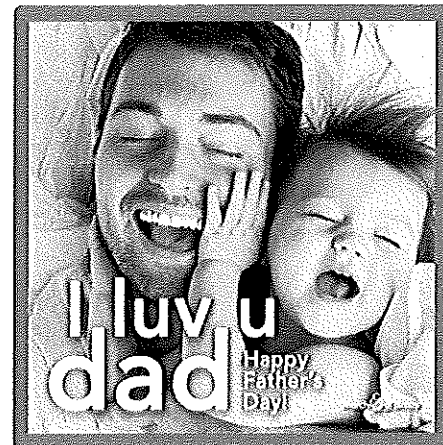
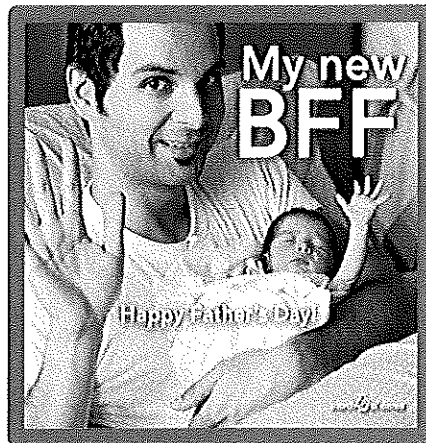
It's Sun Safety Week! Don't forget to apply & reapply sunscreen when you're outside, especially on children and babies! Visit the March of Dimes website for more sun safety tips: <http://bit.ly/MODsunfun>

It's Sun Safety Week! Did you know it's important to limit babies' skin exposure to the sun from 10am-4pm when the sun is at its hottest? Visit the March of Dimes website for more sun safety tips: <http://bit.ly/MODsunsafety>



Father's Day

Celebrating
fathers through
visual
storytelling...



March of Dimes History

History posts for June

Our journey began 77 years ago in 1938 when President Franklin Roosevelt founded the March of Dimes. Originally called the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, its purpose was to find a cure for polio.

Five years after the funding of Dr. Salk's laboratory by the March of Dimes, 1.8 million people, largely children, participated in the field trial of Dr. Salk's polio vaccine in 1954.



Michigan's Monroe County was one of the historic U.S. polio vaccine trial areas made possible by the March of Dimes. Today, the Monroe County March for Babies is one of the longest running in the state. This year's walk was held on May 3rd on the campus of Monroe County Community College.

On February 1, 1951, an event entitled the "Mothers March" began. All Americans were encouraged to donate their dimes in an effort to raise money to find a cure for polio. At 7pm, fire stations blew horns and local church bells rang. Those who wanted to donate would turn on their porch lights and thousands of volunteers would come to these doors, collecting donations.

This wildly successful event raised funds that would save lives in the battle against polio.



In 1968, the first bone marrow transplant to treat a birth defect was completed with the support of the March of Dimes.

In 1973, with the help of dedicated doctors, the March of Dimes provided proof that using alcohol during pregnancy can lead to birth defects. It is as a result of the advocacy of the March of Dimes that we see warning labels on all alcoholic beverages today.

July

March of Dimes History

History posts for July

The March of Dimes has forever changed our country by funding research that has completely eradicated polio from the United States.



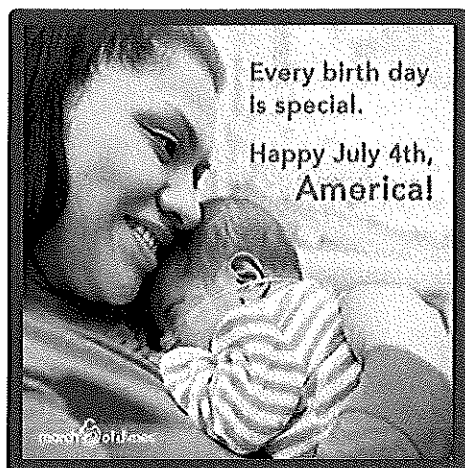
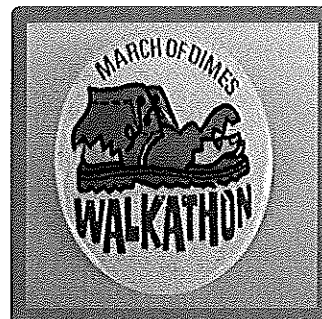
Did you know that Dr. Jonas Salk chose not to patent his polio vaccine in 1955, making it more affordable for the people who needed it? Thank you, Dr. Salk!

The work of the March of Dimes has been recognized with thirteen Nobel prizes and has improved the health of millions of children.

Beginning in 1970, the March of Dimes was the first United States nonprofit to use the walkathon concept for fundraising.

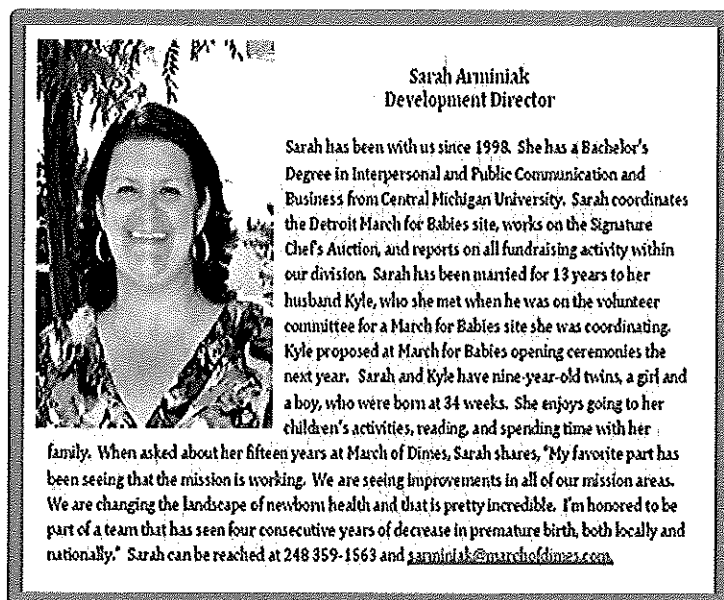
Research has shown that premature infants gain up to 5.5 grams a day more and can be

discharged from the hospital up to twelve days faster with music therapy.



← Independence Day post

August



Behind the Scenes at MOD

These bios were done in 2013, but I have one here as an example. If the text is too small to read, this is also available on the share drive within the communications plan file under the file name 'bios'.

This is a fun project for an intern or volunteer. They can interview each staff member and get a picture from each or take a new one, and then type up a short bio that can be posted. These bios were really popular when we did them back in 2013. We also put them all together and gave copies to our board members. We got a great response in

doing this and our board members really enjoyed learning more about our staff as well as the convenience of having all staff's contact information in one place.

Other 'Behind the Scenes' recommendations:

If resources allow, you can also include candid photos of activities going on at the office and out in the community. Our supporters love to see us in action! The more relatable and authentic we can be, the better!

Note-These posts need not be confined to just one month. I have put them together here for the sake of organization, but they can be scattered throughout the calendar year and be just as effective.

Golf Events

Most divisions have a golf event during the late summer. The weeks leading up to your division's event is a great time to create a few posts thanking your division's major sponsors for the golf event and share information about the event so that supporters can participate. If you can, try to have a volunteer or staff member assigned to the task of taking pictures on their tablet or smart phone and uploading them in real time. People really like to see things as they happen, and you can have this person encourage other participants to post pictures on our page of them enjoying the event!

This type of activity GREATLY increases engagement levels and ultimately helps raise both awareness and fundraising dollars and is a relatively simple thing to do. All you need is a volunteer you trust!

Racial and Ethnic Disparities Post

During September and October, we will continue this focus during National Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15).

United States



Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Premature Birth

The March of Dimes is concerned about inequities in health and health care that contribute to higher rates of preterm birth among different racial and ethnic groups. We urge state and federal governments to support funding and innovative practices that address the complex medical and social factors underlying racial and ethnic disparities in premature birth.

In the United States:

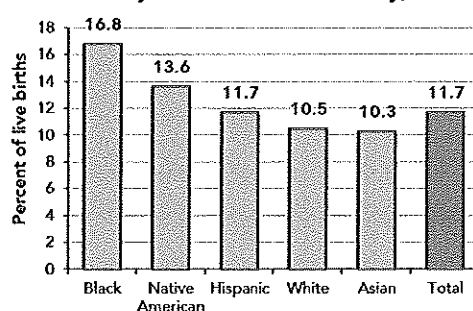
In 2011, 11.7% of live births were born preterm in the United States.

- Rates of preterm birth were highest among births to Black mothers (16.8%), followed by Native American (13.6%) and Hispanic (11.7%), and lowest among births to White (10.5%) and Asian mothers (10.3%).
- One in 6 births to Black mothers was preterm.
- The preterm birth rate among Black mothers was 1.6 times the rate among White mothers.

The overall preterm birth rate in the United States decreased 8.6% between 2006 (12.8%) and 2011 (11.7%). The changes in preterm rates by maternal race/ethnicity were as follows:

- Preterm among Blacks decreased 9.2%.
- Preterm among Native Americans decreased 4.9%.
- Preterm among Hispanics decreased 4.1%.
- Preterm among Whites decreased 10.3%.
- Preterm among Asians decreased 5.5%.

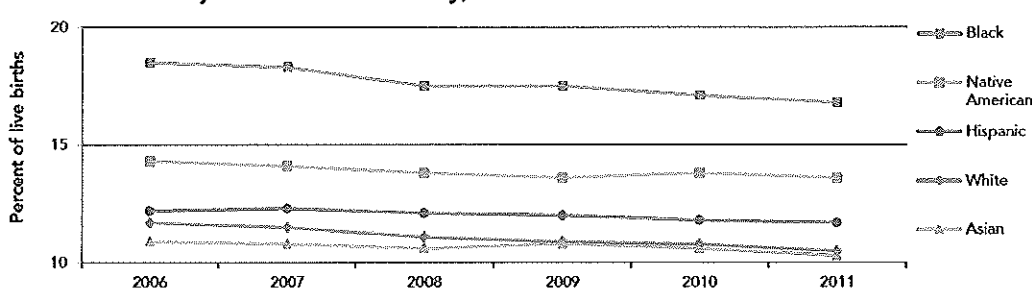
Preterm by maternal race/ethnicity, 2011



In 2011, 3,953,590 babies were born in the United States.

- Births to White mothers accounted for 54.7% of all live births followed by Hispanic mothers (23.4%), Black mothers (14.8%), Asian mothers (6.1%) and Native American mothers (1.0%).
- While births to Black mothers account for 14.8% of all live births, they make up 21.2% of preterm births.

Preterm by maternal race/ethnicity, 2006-2011

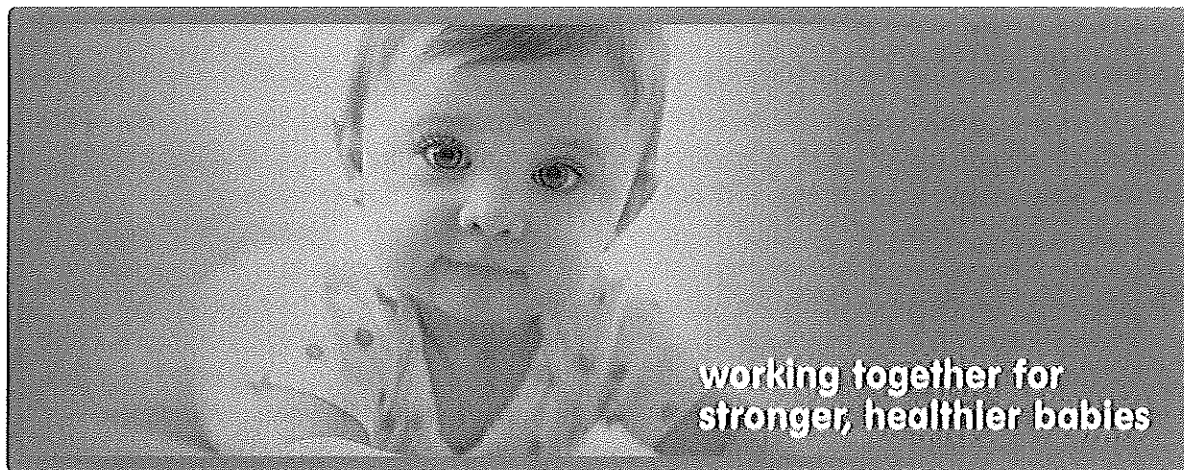


Notes: Preterm is less than 37 completed weeks gestation.
Rates not shown for group if numerator was less than 20.
Race categories (white, black, Native American and Asian) include only women of non-Hispanic ethnicity.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data.

More data on preterm birth and disparities can be found on PeriStats at www.marchofdimes.com/peristats/unitedstates

Prepared by March of Dimes Perinatal Data Center, October 2013



September

Back to School post → Happy first day of school to all your little ones and bigger ones!

National Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15th-October 15th

For Our Hispanic Audience:

Posts in English-

The March of Dimes is committed to improving the health of all babies. Our refreshed Spanish-language website, nacersano.org, has the information families need on preconception, pregnancy, baby, loss, complications and prematurity. With a new video library, the site offers additional ways to meet your needs. We hope you will "Like" the [nacersano](https://www.facebook.com/nacersano) Facebook page too!



Did you take your Folic Acid today? Folic acid works only if you take it before pregnancy and during the first few weeks of pregnancy. Learn all about it at nacersano.org.

In honor of all the Latina moms, we're pleased to present the redesigned nacersano.org. Take a look! The site is full of excellent information and you can even create an

account and personalize your experience. Visit us and be part of the March of Dimes family on nacersano.org.

www.nacersano.org is the March of Dimes Spanish-language website. It's been a reliable source of health information for Hispanic women and families worldwide for 20 years. Now we're happy to tell everyone it's been updated and revised.

Visitors to [nacersano](http://nacersano.org) can ask questions via email about nutrition, pregnancy, and baby health. March of Dimes health experts reply with personalized answers within 48 hours.

Thalia, Latin Grammy Award-winning artist, mother of two young children, and a global ambassador for the March of Dimes, is helping to get the word out about the new [nacersano](http://nacersano.org). Quote from Thalia: "I feel so privileged as a mom to be part of a significant organization like the March of Dimes that works hard to prevent prematurity and helps moms to have healthy babies. I'm very happy that the March of Dimes has even more resources available to continue to educate moms and families worldwide. As a mom, I can't think of anything more important than the health of our children."

Babies born to Hispanic women are about twenty percent more likely to have a serious birth defect of the brain and spine known as neural tube defects (NTDs) than non-Hispanic white women. One reason may be that some Hispanic women consume less of the B vitamin folic acid, which can help protect against these birth defects.

All women of childbearing age, whether or not they're planning to have a baby, should take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. This is the best way to protect your future children from these serious brain and spine defects.

Eating foods rich in folate (the natural form of folic acid) or fortified with folic acid are other great ways to get enough of this essential B vitamin.

Visitors to nacersano.org can find dozens of delicious recipes from various Latin America cultures that contain folic acid. You also can submit your own folic acid-rich recipes to the site.



Nacersano.org also features hundreds of health articles, ovulation and due date calculators, and educational videos. You can sign up to receive free monthly e-newsletters filled with helpful info.

"Like" us on www.facebook.com/nacersano and follow us [@nacersano](https://twitter.com/nacersano) and [@nacersanobaby](https://twitter.com/nacersanobaby) on Twitter.

Posts en Español

March of Dimes está comprometida a mejorar la salud de todos los bebés. El nuevo diseño de nacersano.org tiene la información que las familias necesitan sobre la preconcepción, el embarazo, la salud del bebé, la pérdida, complicaciones y el nacimiento prematuro. Incluso



ofrece una nueva biblioteca de videos educativos. ¡No se olvide ofrecerle un "Me gusta" a la página en Facebook!

¿Tomó su ácido fólico hoy? El ácido fólico funciona sólo si lo toma antes del embarazo y durante las primeras semanas del embarazo. Aprenda más sobre el ácido fólico en nacersano.org.

En honor a todas las mamás latinas, nos complace en presentar el diseño de nacersano.org. ¡Échele un vistazo! El sitio

está lleno de información excelente y hasta puede crear una cuenta para personalizar su experiencia. Venga y sea parte de la familia de March of Dimes en nacersano.org.

www.nacersano.org es el sitio web en español de March of Dimes. Por casi 20 años, ha sido un recurso confiable de información sobre la salud para mujeres y familias hispanas en todo el mundo. Nos complace anunciar que este sitio se ha actualizado y revisado.

En el sitio de [nacersano](http://nacersano.org) se pueden formular preguntas por correo electrónico sobre nutrición, embarazo y la salud del bebé. Los expertos en salud de March of Dimes contestan con respuestas personalizadas dentro de las 48 horas.

Thalía, artista latina galardonada con los Premios Grammy, madre de dos niños pequeños y embajadora mundial de March of Dimes, está promocionando el nuevo sitio de [nacersano](http://nacersano.org). Cita de Thalía: "Me siento tan privilegiada como madre de ser parte de una organización tan significativa como March of Dimes que trabaja arduamente para prevenir el nacimiento prematuro y que las mamás puedan tener bebés saludables. Me alegra mucho que March of Dimes tendrá aún más recursos disponibles para poder seguir educando a madres y familias alrededor del mundo.

Como madre, no puedo pensar en algo más importante que la salud de nuestros niños".



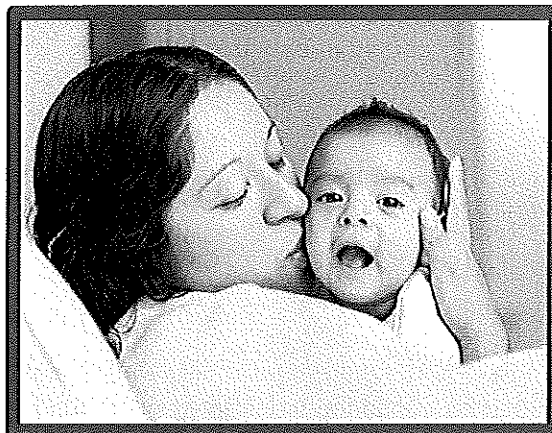
Los bebés nacidos de mujeres hispanas tienen alrededor de un 20 por ciento más de probabilidades de sufrir serios defectos de nacimiento en el cerebro y la médula espinal, conocidos como defectos del tubo neural, que los bebés de mujeres blancas no hispanas. Un motivo puede ser que las mujeres hispanas consumen menos del ácido fólico de la vitamina B, que puede ayudar a proteger contra esos defectos de nacimiento.

Todas las mujeres en edad de procrear, aunque no estén planeando tener un bebé, deben tomar una multivitamina con 400 microgramos de ácido fólico todos los días. Esta es la mejor manera de proteger a sus futuros hijos de estos graves defectos del cerebro y la médula espinal.

Comer alimentos ricos en folato (la forma natural del ácido fólico) o fortificados con ácido fólico son otras excelentes maneras de ingerir suficiente cantidad de esta vitamina B esencial.

En nacersano.org se encontrarán docenas de recetas deliciosas de distintas culturas latinoamericanas que contienen ácido fólico. Usted también puede enviar al sitio sus propias recetas ricas en ácido fólico.

Además, nacersano.org cuenta con cientos de artículos sobre salud, calculadores de ovulación y fecha de parto, así como videos educativos. Puede inscribirse para recibir los boletines mensuales gratuitos repletos de información útil.



Márquenosen como "Me gusta" en www.facebook.com/nacersano y síganosen en [@nacersano](https://twitter.com/nacersano) y [@nacersanobaby](https://twitter.com/nacersanobaby) en Twitter.

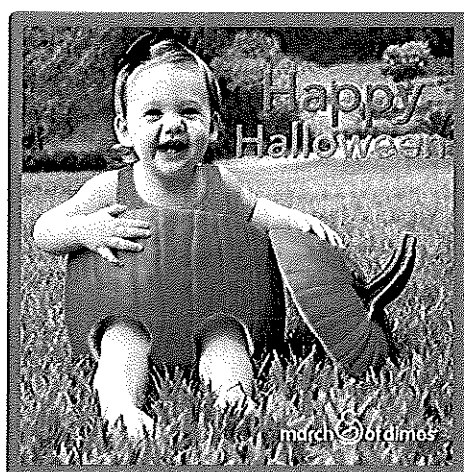
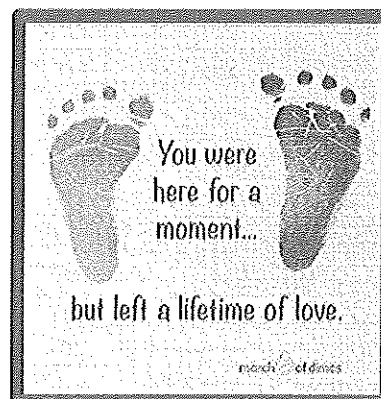
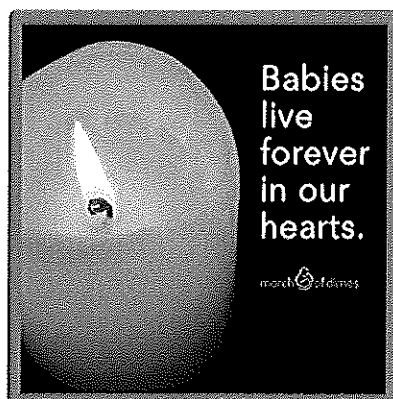
October



October 15th

Infant Loss

Remembrance Day →

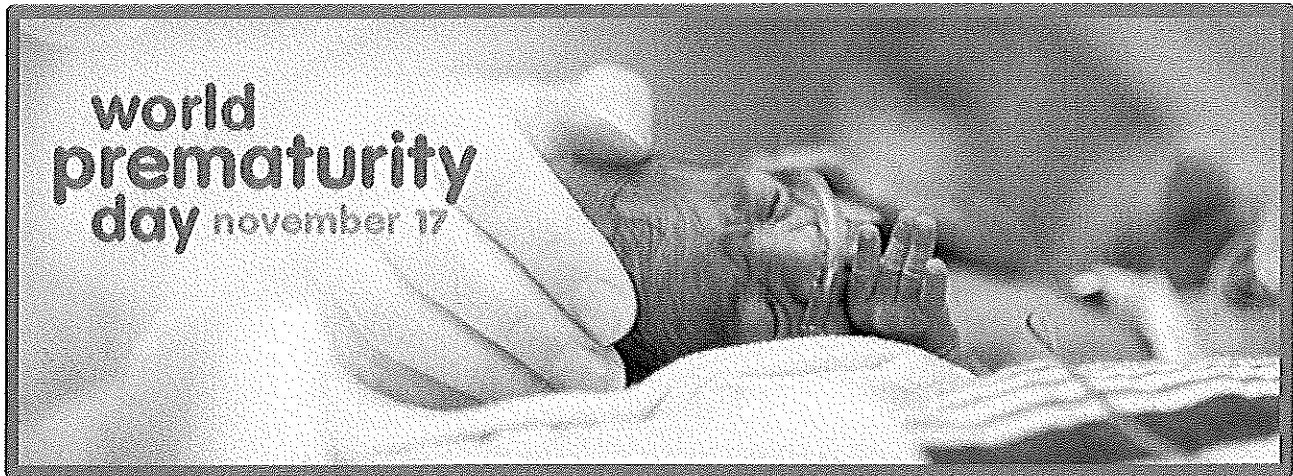


← Halloween

October 31st

Happy Halloween from all of us at the March of Dimes! You might not guess it at first glance, but this little "pumpkin" was a preemie born on Halloween! Now she's happy and thriving!

November



Prematurity Awareness Month

Some famous preemies:

- Albert Einstein
- Mark Twain
- Sir Winston Churchill
- Napoleon Bonaparte
- Stevie Wonder

Half of all neurological disabilities in children are related to premature birth.

The average birth weight of triplets is 3lbs 11oz.

The average birth weight of twins is 5lbs 3oz.



Together, the March of Dimes and Stanford University have created the nation's first transdisciplinary research center dedicated to identifying the causes of premature birth. Over one hundred and thirty scientists in fields ranging from neonatology and genetics to computer science and artificial intelligence are pursuing a revolutionary model of "team science" to find answers. www.prematurityresearch.org.

A full-term pregnancy lasts 39 to 40 weeks; premature birth is when a baby is born before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy.

In the United States, 543,000 babies (or 1 in 9) are born too soon each year.

In 2013 ----->

Many babies born prematurely are too sick or too small to go home and spend their first few weeks, or even months, of life in a newborn intensive care unit (NICU)

A full-term pregnancy lasts 39 to 40 weeks; premature birth is when a baby is born before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy.

In the United States, 543,000 babies (or 1 in 8) are born too soon each year.



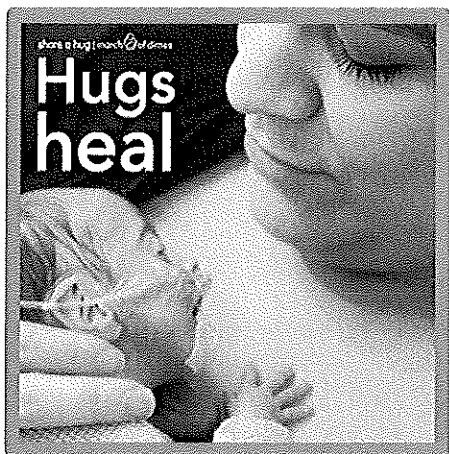
Many babies born prematurely are too sick or too small to go home and spend their first few weeks, or even months, of life in a newborn intensive care unit (NICU).

Some premature babies face serious health complications, including:

- Respiratory distress syndrome (RDS): A serious breathing problem.
- Bleeding in the brain: Can cause pressure in the brain and brain damage.
- Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA): A heart problem that is common in premature babies. Untreated, it may cause heart failure.
- Necrotizing enterocolitis (NEC): A potentially dangerous intestinal problem.
- Retinopathy of prematurity (ROP): An eye problem; in severe cases, treatment is needed to avoid vision loss.

Recent research suggests preterm labor can be caused by the body's natural response to certain infections. Preterm labor is labor that happens before 37 completed weeks of pregnancy.

About 25 percent of premature births are caused by early induction of labor or c-section due to health complications in the mother or baby.



Some "late preterm" births occur because mothers choose to schedule labor induction or a c-section too soon. If your pregnancy is healthy and you're planning to schedule your baby's birth, wait until at least 39 weeks of pregnancy.

About half of the causes of premature birth are unknown.

Researchers have identified some risk factors that may increase the chance of a woman having a baby prematurely:

Smoking, drinking alcohol, doing illegal drugs
High levels of stress

Domestic violence, including physical, sexual or emotional abuse

Certain groups of women have an increased risk of having a premature baby:

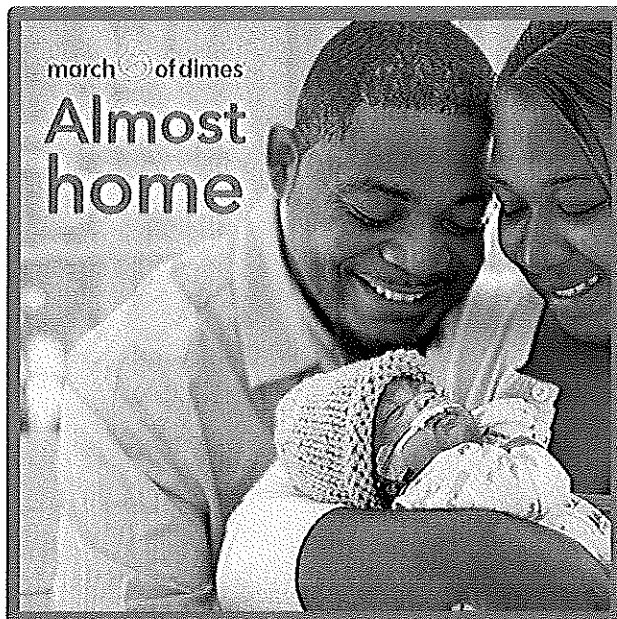
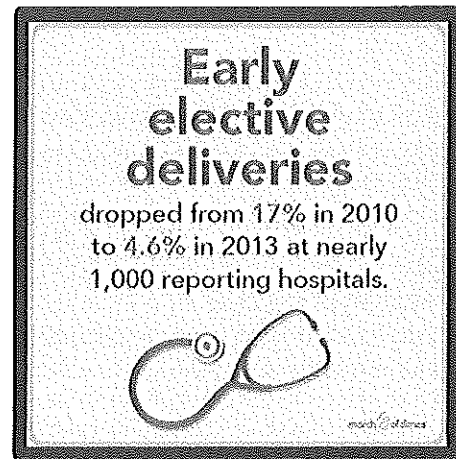
- African-American women
- Women younger than 17 and older than 35
- Low-income women
- Women pregnant with twins, triplets or more
- Women who have previously had a premature baby
- Women who have a family history of premature birth

General information & in-depth information:

- <http://www.marchofdimes.com/mission/prematurity.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/PrematureBirth/>

Warning signs of preterm labor:

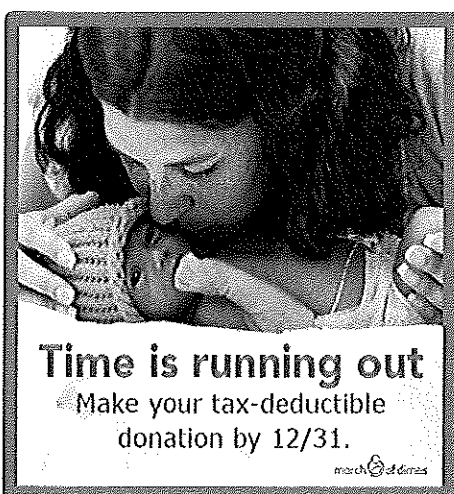
- http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/preterm_labor_signs.html



Thanksgiving

Wherever you are today, the March of Dimes wishes you a happy Thanksgiving.

December



Step Seven: Program Evaluation: Measuring the Impact

Just as important as the process of designing and carrying out a modern communications plan is the process of measuring and evaluating its impact. "Measurement enables an organization to assess and improve their relationships with stakeholders," (Kanter & Paine, 2012, p 8). When equipped with appropriate and useful data, a nonprofit can analyze results and use those results in a positive way to become more efficient and effective in their future actions. "Evaluations are useful because they improve the analytic capacity of stakeholders and increase the likelihood that evaluation results will be used to refine and improve programs," (Fine et al., 2000).

One type of evaluation that can be used with this type of program is the basic pre-test/post-test comparison. Although it is a non-experimental design and with it comes inherent threats to internal validity, this type of comparison may still offer some valuable insight about how our communications are being received by stakeholders and can display our impact over time in a tangible way. This data can be used to adjust our communications to best suit the preferences and personal characteristics of our stakeholders.

Three general types of measurement tools that are most frequently used to make these types of comparisons are 1) content analysis, 2) web and social media analytics, and 3) online and offline surveys (Kanter & Paine, 2012, p 51). These tools can be used to collect data that is relevant to our goals and objectives and can be organized in a way that makes its interpretation understandable. Data can be collected regarding how engaged people are when on our page, how many people we are reaching, how many new people are looking at us, and what actions people are taking as a result of what we say or do (Girarden and Ilsen, 2014). Most email providers and social media networks offer their own built-in analytics tools that can be used by nonprofit leadership and communications staff members. Additionally, online programs such as Google Analytics allow us to see from where our website visitors are coming to us and how interested and engaged they are when logged onto our site. This data can then be used in

strategic planning discussions, allowing us to explore more possibilities for increasing revenue, engagement and mission awareness within the state of Michigan.

Discussion

Nonprofit communications have undergone social, technological and cultural changes over the last two decades, resulting in an increased focus on the concept of community engagement as well as a need to understand generational differences and adapt to technological advances. Generally speaking, nonprofit organizations in the United States today are experiencing a period of substantial growth. Along with this growth comes a nonprofit's opportunity to advance their mission and further their impact and awareness. In an effort to adapt to these changes and maximize the opportunities that nonprofit sector growth offers, nonprofit leadership and communications staff can design and implement a modern communications plan.

Using relevant research including recent nonprofit benchmarks, a step-by-step guide to designing an innovative communications strategy for MOD's Michigan Chapter was presented. The main steps in this guide involve: 1) defining goals and objectives, 2) identifying a diverse array of stakeholders, 3) creating a timeline, 4) finding our voice and brand, 5) defining communication methods, 6) content creation and 7) program evaluation. Utilizing these steps, the implementation of this modern communications plan aims to have a positive impact on engagement, volunteerism and development of the Michigan Chapter of the March of Dimes in 2015 and beyond.

Editorial Commentary

Perhaps the most important point to take away from all of this information is this fact: *communications precedes revenue*. In order to see improvements in revenue development, we must first focus on improving our communications with supporters. People are much more likely to give to a cause that they are familiar with, that they understand and that has touched their heart. A phone call from a stranger asking for money will not touch their heart, but a video

shared on social media showing how a local premature baby was helped by MOD will. Walking in to a large company and asking for a sponsorship may not touch their heart, but walking in with one of their employees who is mission affected and willing to share their story will. We make these connections and develop these relationships by investing in quality communications. Invest in communications staff first, then invest in development staff. Communications staff will build the solid foundation upon which development staff can stand tall and move mountains for stronger, healthier babies.

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