



York's March for Babies ambassador, 3, benefited from group

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Jonathan Butcher flies high during a playground outing Tuesday at Camp Security Park in Springettsbury Township, after a big push from his mother, Debbie Butcher. Jonathan, 3, is the York Ambassador for next month's 2010 March for Babies, the primary fundraiser for the March of Dimes, at John C. Rudy County Park. (DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS -- BIL BOWDEN)



The day he was born, Jonathan Butcher weighed about 19 ounces and was 12 inches long. (SUBMITTED)

"My husband's wedding ring fit over his hand and slid up to his elbow."

That's how Debbie Butcher described the tiny size of her son, Jonathan, who was born 14 weeks early due to severe preeclampsia -- a condition in pregnancy characterized by high blood pressure.

"It's a very serious condition," Butcher said. "The only way to cure it is to have the baby."

Two years prior, Butcher and her husband, Scott, of Windsor Township, delivered their daughter Emily 16 weeks early. Emily lived less than 90 minutes.

After Jonathan was born, he spent 124 days in the neonatal intensive care unit at York Hospital.

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"We felt he was in the safest place he could be," Debbie Butcher said.

Today, 3-year-old Jonathan is the York Ambassador for next month's 2010 March for Babies, the primary fundraiser for the March of Dimes.

"We support the March of Dimes because of Jonathan and because of Emily," Debbie Butcher said.

Jonathan benefited from research funded by the March of Dimes, which is dedicated to improving the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality, she said.

Because Jonathan spent the first couple of months of his life intubated and breathing with the help of a ventilator, he has chronic lung disease.

But children regenerate lung tissue, Debbie Butcher said.

Jonathan's lungs are now stronger than they were a year ago, she said.

He has "caught up" physically and developmentally, she said, and added that it's hard to believe now that he was ever a premie.

Scott Butcher said he likes to tell people that Jonathan accomplished more in his first four months of life "than I've accomplished in my first" 40 years.

"On one of Jonathan's last nights in the NICU, I remember telling one of his doctors that Debbie and I would forever be preaching the NICU gospel," Scott Butcher wrote in an e-mail. "It was a terrifying yet awe-inspiring experience, and the York community should be proud of all the amazing work they do at the York Hospital NICU."

LOCAL MARCH

The 2010 March for Babies, the primary fundraiser for the March of Dimes, will be May 2.

Registration opens at 8 a.m. and the walk starts at 10 a.m. at John C. Rudy County Park, 400 Mundis Race Road in East Manchester Township.

To become a corporate sponsor or learn how to form a team to walk at the event, e-mail debbiebutcher@yorklinks.net.

To walk for "Team Jonathan B," [click here](#) .

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