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### *New York Network Creates Unified Voice for Prematurity Challenges*

**ALBANY- (January xx, 2009)**— In an average week, 4,738 babies are born in the state of New York. Five hundred seventy-five *of those babies (12%) are born premature.*<sup>1</sup> New York currently ranks 19<sup>th</sup> in the United States for the number of premature births each year.<sup>2</sup> Premature infants face a number of challenges including increased risk of developmental problems, nutrition challenges, infection risk, vision and hearing impairment and chronic respiratory diseases. In addition, it is equally important to raise awareness of the sometimes life-long consequences for children born prematurely and the challenges their parents face trying to secure and afford essential health and support services for their newborns

New York families are fortunate to live in a state that has historically been committed to the health and education of its children. Unlike many other states, NY has valuable statewide programs available for families to help ensure our children's safety, growth and development. Members of the NY State Legislature have played a vital role in keeping our precious children a priority, in particular the most vulnerable at risk infants.

“Prematurity is a problem that can affect everyone, people living in suburban and/or urban regions. As it continues to rise, so do the consequences of prematurity – increased cost-of-care; increased infant mortality; and increased disability, both physical and mental,” stated Sergio G. Golombek, MD, MPH, FAAP, Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Clinical Public Health New York Medical College Attending Neonatologist Regional Neonatal Center-Maria Fareri Children's Hospital. “Prematurity is something that needs to pull resources and efforts from everyone in the community. Not only is this an issue for physicians, nurses and healthcare workers, but it also requires attention from politicians and families. Together we need to address some of the few clear factors that can cause preterm birth, such as poor prenatal care and substance abuse.”

The New York Premature Infant Health Network was established to help create a statewide unified voice to articulate the many unique challenges premature infants face once they leave the hospital and care begins at home. The Network also seeks to advocate for access to essential services for all babies and their families no matter where they reside in the state. The Network membership includes representatives from nearly 60 community and health organizations, faith-based groups, healthcare providers and parents from across the state.

“One of the biggest challenges caregivers and families face in New York is the continuum of care from the NICU to the community. The Network will dedicate efforts to increase communication and education to medical professionals, policy makers and communities of available services and programs for families affected by prematurity. Additionally we hope to centralize expertise to create a statewide advocate for the tiniest New Yorkers who need each of us to be their voice,” said Maureen Doolan Boyle, Executive Director, [Mothers of Supertwins,\(MOST\)](#) and Chair of [PremieCare](#).

“As New York, like the rest of the nation, strives to address current fiscal issues, it is important that we are not short-sighted in cutting programs and services, especially those for our most vulnerable infants and children, that will place a greater burden on families and NYS in the long run,” commented Sharon Chesna, Director, Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network.

The New York Premature Infant Health Network holds regular meetings in Albany and New York City and schedules additional member communication through periodic statewide conference calls. If you would like more information on the New York Premature Infant Health Network, contact Annette Eyer, Network Coordinator (Consultant), at [ayer@cullarigroup.com](mailto:ayer@cullarigroup.com) or (717) 433-7109. The New York Premature Infant Health Network is supported and funded by MedImmune, LLC, which provides administrative and operational direction through its consultant, Cullari Communications Group.

Several members of the New York Premature Infant Health Network include: Blythedale Children's Hospital; BirthNet; Central Harlem Healthy Start Program; Centro Civico of Amsterdam, Inc; Long Island University/ Brooklyn Campus; Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network; Mothers & Babies Perinatal Network of SCNY, Inc; MOST; New York State Academy of Family Physicians; New York City Association of Neonatal Nurses; New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene- Brooklyn Healthy Start Project. North Country Prenatal/Perinatal Council; The Regional Neonatal Center-Maria Fareri Children's Hospital; Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership, and PremieCare.

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, final natality date. Retrieved September 18, 2008 from [www.marchofdimes.com/peristats](http://www.marchofdimes.com/peristats).

<sup>2</sup> Child Trends analysis of 1990-2005 Natality Data Set CD Series 21, numbers 2-9, 11-12, 14-16 (SETS versions), and 16H and 17Ha (ASCII version), National Center for Health Statistics. <http://www.kidscount.org/>.