

# The Covington News

**By Rachel Oswald**

Senior Reporter

[roswald@covnews.com](mailto:roswald@covnews.com)

770-787-6397, ext. 23

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## Marching to save babies

Locals gather to raise funds for March of Dimes

At a kickoff event for the 2009 March of Dimes fundraising campaign at Rockdale Medical Center Friday morning, attendees were reminded what they were fighting for when new mother Mandy Young recounted what it was like when she had to be rushed in for an emergency Cesarean section.

Early on in the pregnancy of her son Tucker, doctors determined that it was a high-risk one. Once she was diagnosed with severe pre-eclampsia, a condition where hypertension arises during pregnancy, doctors ordered the Cesarean section and Tucker was born.

At birth he weighed 4 pounds and had to use a breathing tube for several days. But with the help of occupational therapists, Tucker was soon back on track and he and mother were discharged from the hospital after two weeks.

"He's a healthy baby boy now," said Johnson of her seven month old, 7 pound son. "You don't realize the significances that the March of Dimes has on your life until it happens to you."

A reoccurring theme at the kickoff event for Newton and Rockdale March of Dimes team captains was that the research funded through March of Dimes affects all babies, not just the ones born prematurely or with birth defects.

The March of Dimes is a nonprofit health organization with the mission of improving the health of all babies by preventing birth defects and infant mortality.

According to Kylie Rowlands, clinical nurse specialist in RMC's birth care unit, despite all of the improvements in neonatal medicine, the

rate of premature births has actually increased nationally with one in eight babies being born prematurely today.

"They have lifelong problems, not just immediate problems," said Rowlands.

Georgia has an above average rate of premature births compared to the national average and Rockdale and Newton counties both have higher rates than the state average she said.

"We're very far from our goal of preventing prematurity so we need to continue our work," said Stephanie Moraille, regional director of March of Dimes.

Newton Medical Center Birthcare Clinical Manager Tammy Hotz also spoke of the importance of continued research into neonatal health. NMC will be opening its own Neonatal Intensive Care Unit next month.

"There's still more to go and much more we can do," she said. "It's not just the sick baby, it's the whole baby...health of the mother...education for the [hospital nursing] staff [that March of Dimes] is striving to improve, that's why they're important."

The March of Dimes fundraising campaign will culminate this year with the Rockdale-Newton March for Babies on Saturday, March 28 at the Olde Town Pavilion in Conyers. Macy's is the 2009 State Sponsor of the Program. Locally C.R. Bard is also sponsoring the walk.