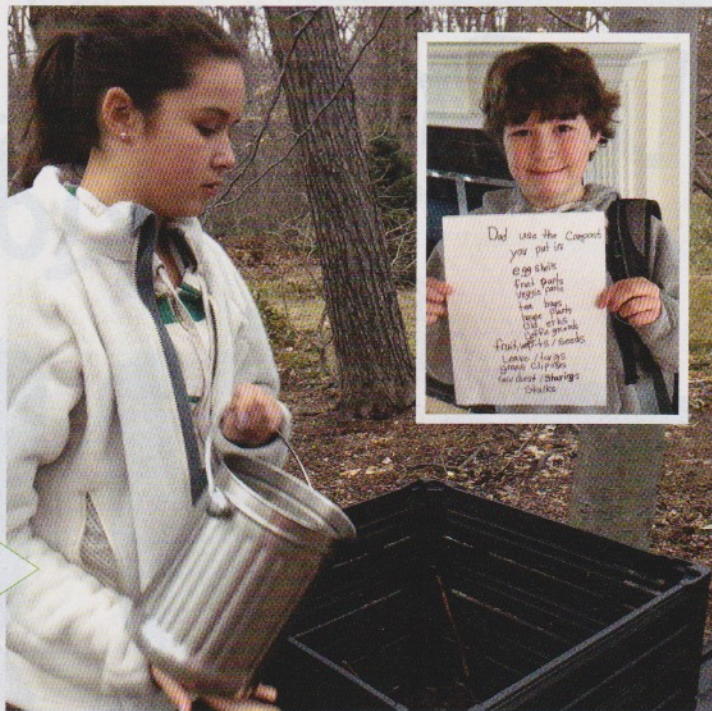


# come on, kids, let's compost!

Can a busy mom get her three school-age children to take on this eco-task? *by Christina Boyle Cush*

**THE CHALLENGE** Delegating Mom's composting duties to her two daughters and son for three weeks.

**THE FAMILY** Christina and Michael Cush, of Darien, Connecticut, and their daughter, Piper, 12, and twins, Thomas and Remy, 9.



**Fielding excuses:** It's been four years since we bought an outdoor composting box, which we started using after my older daughter's class did a project on the topic. My husband and kids were enthusiastic to begin, but over the years, I've become the default composter. As a part-time working mom, I often do chores around the house myself just to move things along. But having recently started a new business—which has put more responsibility on my plate—I was desperate to delegate some household duties. This eco-task seemed like a good place to start. Though my kids will come home from school impassioned after an environmental lesson, their interest invariably wanes. With this challenge, I hoped to show them that it's important to get (and stay) involved—it's their future Earth, after all.

**Making a plan:** Over dinner, I told the kids about the challenge. Rather than whine (I envisioned: "Gross" or "Why do I have to?"), they were reluctantly on board. They already understood the basics of what can and can't be composted (eggshells yes, chicken bones no), so it was important that they know when it was their turn to help. Since I'm not a make-a-chart kind of mom, I asked the kids to work on a fair schedule. My older daughter took the first week, my son the second, and my younger daughter the third.

**Seeing growth:** Using our undersink metal composting can (with charcoal filters to zap odor), the first week began. My husband's only request was that the kids churn the outdoor pile with a pitchfork to help it break down. It was Piper's turn, and she preferred using a long stick.

As we rolled into week two, there was some whining from the girls about schlepping the kitchen scraps across our yard

to the compost pile. I understood. I'd done it many times in unpleasant weather and slippery conditions. But their brother was home sick, so they needed to step in. They decided that Remy would take Thomas's shift. Later that week, the girls volunteered to help each other clean out their closets and put aside clothes that needed to be donated or become hand-me-downs. This act was unprecedented. Did they sense I was stressed about their brother? Were they realizing that it feels nice to help? Either way, they were definitely getting more into it.

**Improving attitudes:** By week three, my son was well enough to do his share. He rolled his eyes a few times when the scrap bucket was maxed out—and he also preferred that I *not* remind him to add the scraps to the outdoor pile and churn it when he was doing something fun. I promised I would be more patient and let him do it on his own.

**Training Dad:** Now that the kids were in the groove, we collaborated on getting my husband more accustomed to using the kitchen bucket. During week three, I picked his veggie scraps and eggshells from the garbage and plopped them in the compost bin. To re-educate their dad, the twins posted signs in the kitchen about what to compost. Since then, I've rescued fewer and fewer compostables out of the garbage.

**My advice:** School-age kids (and husbands!) are old enough to help around the house, especially when it comes to doing green chores. My brood was happier when we composted on their terms and they took charge by setting the schedule, researching online what's compostable, and co-managing their dad. And I'm working on my end of the bargain: being more laid-back and letting the kids take the lead. ●



# change a face, transform a life

How one organization helps children change how they see themselves—both inside and out

by Jeryl Brunner

Ever since I could remember, my mother told me I was beautiful. But everything changed when preschool started. On the playground, the kids ran away from me. Why? Because I was born with a cleft lip and palate, which occurs when a baby's lip and mouth do not properly fuse together. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year an estimated 4,437 babies are born with this birth defect.

Throughout my childhood and young adulthood, my cleft palate was repaired with 18 surgeries. After all the operations, I wanted to connect with and support families who were going through similar experiences. That's when I discovered the National Foundation for Facial Reconstruction (NFFR), which is affiliated with the Institute of Reconstructive Plastic Surgery (IRPS) at NYU Langone Medical Center, in New York City.

For more than six decades the NFFR has helped over 60,000 children get the treatment they need for a variety of facial birth defects including cleft lip and palate and other craniofacial anomalies. Surgeries for many patients can begin in early infancy, and they undergo progressive surgeries at various points, depending on growth and development.

"Seventy percent of our families live at or below poverty level and are uninsured," says Aileen Blitz, Ph.D., consulting clinical psychologist for the NFFR. "But no family is ever turned away for services regardless of need." The NFFR is predominantly funded by private donations through their annual benefit gala and events, like the *Races For Faces* walk.

When Nathaniel Alexander Newman was born, his parents knew that something was wrong. "Nathaniel's birth was quite shocking," recalls his father, Russel Newman, who lives with his family in Matthews, North Carolina. "His face was grotesquely swollen. He was born with no ears, no cheekbones, severe downward-facing eyes, and little or no mandible, or jawbone." Because he lacked cheekbones, his eye sockets had swollen to the size of tennis balls. Nathaniel had Treacher-Collins syndrome.

But the family found a miracle with the NFFR. At the time, the Newman family lacked the resources needed to provide the vast medical care their newborn required, and the NFFR stepped in to offer exceptional care and the funds needed for surgeries. "When you're a patient at the clinic, the doctors there do all they can to help you," explains Newman. "I would get bills totaling \$45,000, but because of funding from the NFFR, I didn't have to lie awake

at night wondering how I was going to afford it. I could focus on Nathaniel's well-being."

Thirty-eight surgeries later, Nathaniel is a thriving third-grader with a great group of friends. As his proud father explains, "His imagination is wonderful. He loves to dream of the day when he can be a crime-fighting superhero!"

Along with providing excellent medical care, the NFFR has developed outstanding family programs. They hold quarterly pizza meetings for families and patients to share resources, and they host presentations on various psychological and social topics, like bullying, sibling concerns, and nutrition.

"The NFFR helps families connect with one another and share experiences about having a craniofacial condition," says Blitz. They get a tremendous amount of emotional support regarding procedures and what to expect. "I've seen both children and parents become really close and develop long-lasting friendships," she explains.

For a small fee, the organization also provides an apartment across the street from the NYU hospital for families whose child is having surgery. For those who live far away, the apartment is priceless. "If anything happens, you can be there in a minute and it helps alleviate anxiety," says Blitz. The Newman family has used it frequently. "Many stays for kids like Nathaniel are six to seven days," explains Newman. "If you had to pay for a NYC hotel it could become a crushing financial hardship. The proximity to the hospital enables each parent to get a good night's sleep without feeling like you are abandoning your child. Also, it just somehow feels good knowing that everyone who stays in the apartment shares a kindred spirit."

For more information about the NFFR, visit [nffr.org](http://nffr.org)



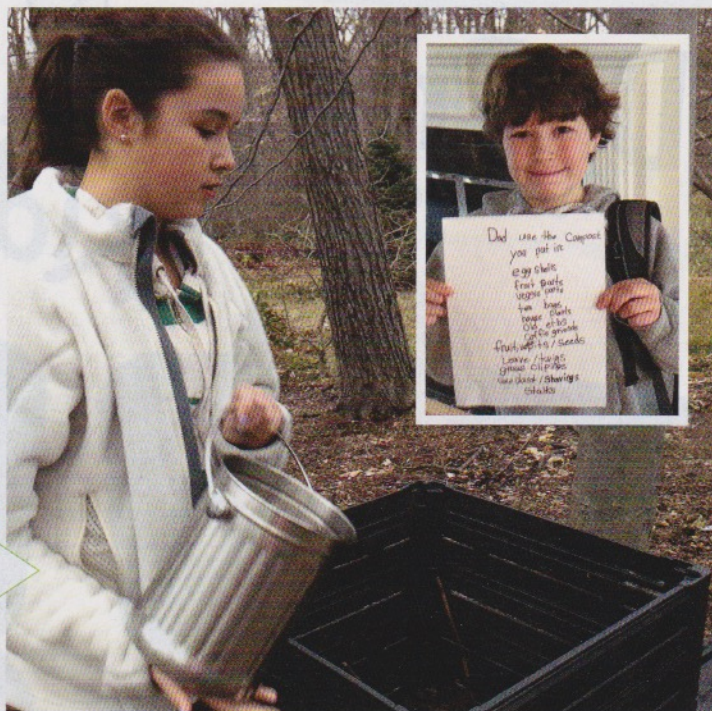
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# preemie parents pay it forward

Families of the tiniest babies join forces to comfort and support one another. **by Christina Boyle Cush**



▲ TTMF helps the families of babies like Jayden, who was born premature.

Opening the door of the Stepping Stones Museum for Children in Norwalk, Connecticut, on a recent Sunday, you would have seen smiling children running from the face painting station to dance with the band, and then to the temporary tattoo booth. The museum was the perfect place to host a reunion for The Tiny Miracles Foundation, Inc. (TTMF), an eight-year-old nonprofit that helps over 1,200 local families with premature infants in and around Fairfield County, Connecticut. Most of the families at the museum have survived one of the toughest challenges of their lives: they have had at least one baby who was born very prematurely and had to spend a chunk of time in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of a local hospital.

At the party, TTMF Board President Leelee Klein floated from family to family, marveling at how big all the kids had grown. Klein's own twin daughters, Grace and Larsen, were born at 26 weeks gestation in 2000. "I know from personal experience that the premature birth of a child can be a shocking, isolating, and frightening experience," says Klein, who has served on the TTMF board for seven years. "Although area hospitals are able to meet most premature infants' medical needs, the emotional and other needs of the family during this fragile time often go largely unsupported. TTMF seeks to fill this void."

TTMF is uniquely comprised of parents of preemies who are trained as mentors to offer comfort, support, and hope to new parents of preemies. Some other services TTMF provides in four local hospitals: Family Resource Rooms (with a preemie research library, a kitchenette, toys, and other distractions for siblings); Welcome Bags and Homecare Starter Kits (with a fleece isolette cover blanket to comfort the baby in the NICU, a bonding doll to ease separation anxiety, and preemie-size essentials); and financial assistance (small emergency grants to help defray nonmedical costs associated with having a preemie).

## HELPING IN MANY WAYS

When Stephanie Hypolite's son Jayden was born at 25 weeks gestation on September 10, 2010, he weighed only one pound, five ounces. After three days at Stamford Hospital in Connecticut, Jayden was transferred to Yale New Haven Children's Hospital's newborn special care unit because he needed a high-quality ventilator. TTMF mentors at Stamford Hospital met Hypolite when Jayden was born to give her a Welcome Bag. "When TTMF learned that Jayden was being transferred to Yale, we knew Stephanie would need more help," says Klein. Hypolite's husband was in Haiti and her father worked full-time, and she got some financial assistance from them, but she was recovering from Jayden's birth and had no car. TTMF drove her to her first visit with Jayden at Yale, which is about an hour from Stamford, and stayed with her while she got to know his new home.

Over the next few weeks, TTMF funded Hypolite's transportation costs so that she could see Jayden. She eventually secured housing at the Ronald McDonald house near the hospital. TTMF stayed in touch with her during that time and sent Jayden clothes as he grew.

During the first few months of his life, Jayden had a tough time: he received 12 blood transfusions; had to get a tracheotomy tube ("trach"); and was ventilator-dependent. Things turned around one month after his first birthday, when the trach was removed—and he was finally able to go home. Since Hypolite hadn't worked in over a year, TTMF paid for her security deposit on a new place, plus her first month's rent. Jayden was released from the hospital on November 4, 2011, still on oxygen, and settled into the new crib that TTMF provided. Today, he is an active and chatty 2½-year-old, who weighs almost 30 pounds and is oxygen-free. "He is a miracle to me," says Hypolite. "The support I received from TTMF helped me believe that my little baby was going to make it."

For more information about TTMF visit [ttmf.org](http://ttmf.org). ●

# giving thanks



**D**on't you love this time of the year? For my family, it means the sound of Sunday afternoon football games on TV, tree-watching as the spectacular fall display unfolds, pulling out last year's sweaters, hot apple cider with gingersnap cookies, and Halloween crafts and decorations. It's also time to celebrate National Adoption Month and Thanksgiving, both of which are important holidays for my family. We talk about adoption on pages 16 and 26 in this issue, and our feature, "12 Things We're Thankful for in 2012," begins on page 58. Other things I am thankful for this year:

My wonderful daughter, Maylee, tops my list. It's hard to believe that she was only 7 when I started KIWI. She's now 14 and reminds me (often!) that she's a teen. Maylee was my inspiration for creating KIWI and has been the guinea pig in my own parenting experiment (she'd be happy to let you know how I'm making out).

I'm particularly grateful for my parents who still support me in everything that I do and who never fail to tell me how much they enjoy reading KIWI.

Also, I'm thankful for the amazing KIWI and May Media Group staff. I'm lucky to have such a smart, talented group of people on my team. Their dedication and commitment to helping our readers grow healthier families make KIWI what it is today.

And lastly, I'm so appreciative of all our readers. You are such an amazing group of parents. Regardless of where you get your KIWI—in print, on the web, or on a tablet—your never-ending quest to be a great parent inspires and motivates all of us here.

I'd love to hear what you're thankful for this year. Join us on our Facebook page ([facebook.com/kiwimagazine](http://facebook.com/kiwimagazine)) to share your stories.

Warmly,

Maxine Wolf  
ceo + publisher

## P.S.

### BON VOYAGE!

Dreaming of a sun-filled getaway? Who isn't! Enter KIWI Shop's Grand Opening Sweepstakes at [kiwishoponline.com](http://kiwishoponline.com) for your chance to win an all-inclusive 6-day, 5-night trip to Club Med for your family. But hurry—the contest ends October 31!

# kiwi

Growing families the natural and organic way.

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### INSPIRATION

Maylee Wolf, Orson Huggett,  
Ella and Connor Douglass, Samantha Middaugh,  
Caleb and Abbey Biddle, and all of the wonderful  
kids in our lives

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