

Media Release

Premmie Twins Campaign for Preterm Birth Research

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Twenty years after entering the world at just 30 weeks gestation, twin brothers Matthew and Stephen Faigenbaum, of Coolbinia, are helping to spread the word about research into preterm birth prevention.

Born ten weeks premature in 1994, the twin boys faced a battle for survival at King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH). Matthew was just 1200 grams and Stephen, 1000 grams when born. Both boys required assisted ventilation as a result of their early births, and endured bleeds on their brains, septicaemia, kidney infections and Erbs palsy.

Now both healthy, third-year science students at the University of Western Australia, the boys have been spending their summer break volunteering as Merchandise Delivery Drivers, distributing fundraising merchandise boxes to local Perth businesses for the Women and Infants Research Foundation (WIRF).

Entitled the Hug Campaign, the fundraising merchandise boxes aim to raise awareness and funds for WIRF's research into preterm birth prevention, amongst local Perth businesses. WIRF's Marketing and Development Manager, Tina Williams, said "Discovering how to prevent and reduce the dangers preterm birth is one of the WIRF's highest priorities. We are hoping to raise more awareness of the preterm birth through our Hug Campaign, and the funds raised will go directly toward the Foundation's preterm birth prevention research".

WIRF's Director Professor John Newnham said "Preterm birth is the single biggest cause of childhood death and disability in our society. Most children born preterm, like Stephen and Matthew, can expect to go on and lead healthy and productive lives, but many will suffer from disabilities including cerebral palsy, learning and behavioural difficulties, lung disease, and sadly some babies will not survive".

Matthew and Stephen said they were attracted to WIRF's Hug Campaign because of the battles they faced as premature babies. "We often view videos taken by our parents of our time in hospital and owe much to KEMH for what they did to save our lives", said Stephen. "We really wanted to give back to this cause, and are proud to promote and assist WIRF's preterm birth research program".

The twin brothers are both studying chemistry and physiology, and will soon sit their GAMSAT exam with the hope of gaining entry into medicine. "We feel that our interest in science and medicine has been brought about by hearing our parents talk of our premature birth. Knowing what we suffered, we'd like to do something to help prevent others", said Matthew.

Professor Newnham, said "Twin offspring are more likely to be born premature, with 57 percent of all Australian twins born before term, as oppose to 8 percent of singleton births".

The merchandise boxes contain Hug Campaign pens, hand sanitisers, baby rattles, manicure boards and USB's. If your business is interested in selling WIRF's Hug Campaign merchandise to raise funds for preterm birth research, or if you would like to volunteer your time as a Merchandise Delivery Driver, please call (08) 9340 1437 or email info@wirf.com.au. The merchandise can also be purchased online at <http://wirf.com.au/hug>.

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Matthew (left) and Stephen (right) Faigenbaum at 6 weeks of age at KEMH



Stephen (left) and Matthew (right) Faigenbaum ready for their merchandise delivery shift.



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