March of Dimes walk to move to Main Street

By JAMES CLARK
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The March of Dimes has moved its annual walk to Main Street McMinnville in hopes of generating interest from merchants and gaining more participation from walkers.

Organizers say the time is now to start forming a team, or to start collecting donations for the Oct. 15 walk.

This year's ambassadors are Kate and Mason Gribble, the children of Darrell and Jennifer Gribble. The twins were born seven weeks early, but are now healthy and active at over 2 years old.

"Our story starts when I was nine weeks pregnant," said Jennifer in telling her story in a March of Dimes pamphlet. "I went to the doctor to hear my baby's heartbeat for the first time. We got quite a surprise when we heard two heartbeats. My doctor did an ultrasound and we discovered we were going to be blessed with two babies."

Jennifer says her pregnancy was going well and uneventful until her 27th week. That's when she started going into labor. After a two-day hospital stay, she was sent home and made it for two more weeks before going into labor again.

Her babies were born April 3, 2009 with Mason weighing 2 pounds, 13 ounces, and Kate weighing 2 pounds, 10 ounces. Neonatal intensive care took the babies immediately. They remained hospitalized for the next seven weeks.

"I can remember exactly what I was doing when I got the phone call that Mason was ready to come home," said Jennifer. "It was a bittersweet moment because Kate had to stay one more night. But we finally got both our precious babies home."

The March of Dimes is continuing its research and programs to help premature babies experience normal development. This includes research to help the brain, heart, spine, lungs and eyes.

Last year's local walk raised around $7,000. This year's walk will proceed down Main Street beginning at 10 a.m. with registration and pre-walk activities starting at 9 a.m.

Organizers are planning to start on Court Square, but have yet to finalize the starting point, or the route, with city officials.

"We're looking for more visibility and to get downtown businesses involved," said event chair Jenny Grady, the Family Birth Unit director at River Park Hospital.

James Clark photo

Mason Gribble bounces on an inflatable slide at the March of Dimes kickoff event held last week. Mason and his twin sister, Kate, are the ambassadors for the annual March of Dimes walk in McMinnville, which is set for Oct. 15.