

Spotlight

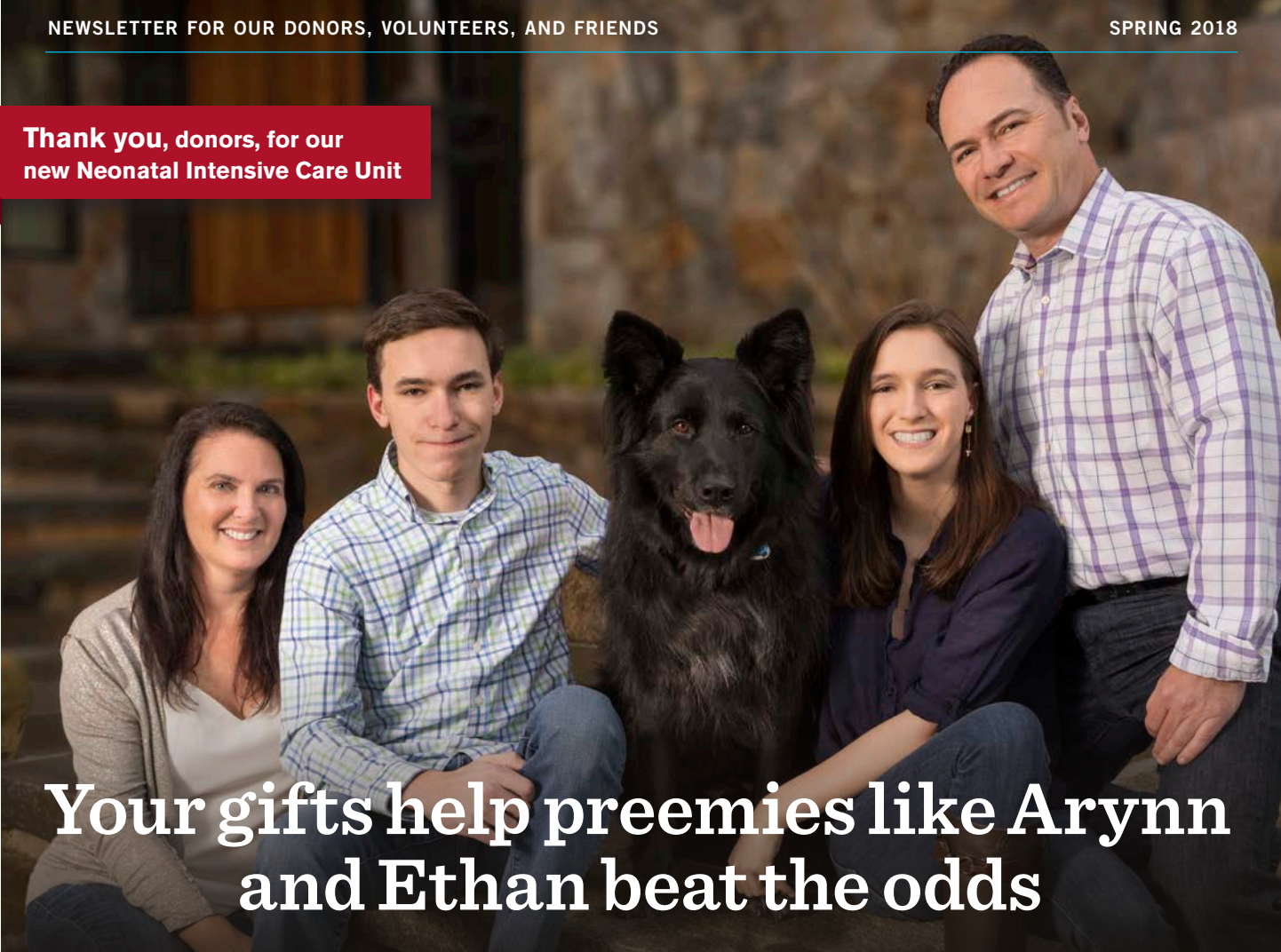
Yale
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NEWSLETTER FOR OUR DONORS, VOLUNTEERS, AND FRIENDS

SPRING 2018

**Thank you, donors, for our
new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit**



Your gifts help preemies like Arynn and Ethan beat the odds

Sixteen years ago, Jennifer and Stan Rybalov were expecting twins. Like most parents-to-be, they had a thousand happy dreams about the future.

But Arynn and Ethan were born far too early, unexpectedly, at only 26 weeks. Each baby weighed less than 1 1/2 pounds. And suddenly the only thing Jennifer and Stan knew about the future was that it was filled with uncertainty.

The newborns spent six months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Yale New Haven Children's Hospital (YNHCH), with their parents constantly at their bedsides. It was a frightening time.

More than once, Jennifer and Stan were told by their doctors to be prepared for the worst.

They got through it by trying to take every day—every hour—one at a time. “We never got too far ahead of ourselves,” says Jennifer, “because you could lose your mind thinking of the 10 million things that could go wrong in an instant. We took every opportunity to celebrate the smallest of achievements: every milliliter of fluid taken in, every gram gained, every day that passed.”

continued inside ⇨



Ethan (L) and Arynn (R) in their isolettes in the NICU, shortly after they were born. They each weighed less than 1 1/2 pounds.

(continued from page 1)

As the months passed, the newborns gradually grew bigger and stronger. Jennifer firmly believes their miraculous progress was the result of the extraordinary care they received in the NICU. “None of it would have happened without the incredible dedication of the teams of doctors and nurses that cared for our children,” she says.

The NICU facility, however, was far from ideal in those days. There was absolutely no privacy in the open layout, for example. Any time an infant suffered a medical crisis, all the families in the unit witnessed it, making a painful and sometimes tragic event even worse.

And there was no space for new parents to spend the night with their newborns. “When our babies were ready to come home, we had never been on our own with them.” says Jennifer. “We didn’t have the opportunity to learn the basics, to fly ‘solo.’ It was quite a learning curve.”

More than a decade later, Jennifer and Stan learned about plans to expand and renovate the NICU. “When I saw the plans included private rooms for

every family, with facilities for the parents to spend the night with their babies, I was honestly moved to tears,” says Jennifer. “We gave as much as we could to the project—and I wish we could have given even more.”



“We were so lucky to make it home from the NICU as a whole family and to have been at YNHCH. All the credit goes to the amazing nurses and doctors there, so we wanted to express our thanks with a donation to the recent campaign to rebuild and expand the NICU.”

JENNIFER

Today, Arynn and Ethan are healthy, typical teenagers. “We couldn’t be happier,” says Jennifer. “Sixteen years ago we didn’t dare dream that ‘typical’ was possible.”

THANK YOU!



Shoutout for Burt’s Bees Baby

Last spring, the wonderful folks at Burt’s Bees Baby® began sending every YNHCH newborn home with a Beekeeper™ wearable blanket. In addition to being adorable, these cozy blankets are designed to replace loose blankets in the crib (as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics).

Thank you, Burt’s Bees Baby, for giving our newborns another reason to feel lucky they were born at YNHCH!

JUST OPENED!

Most advanced NICU in the U.S.

ON JANUARY 30, the first patients moved into our newly renovated, expanded NICU. It’s **“the most advanced NICU in the United States,”** says Cynthia Sparer, executive

director, Children’s Hospital and Women’s Services at YNHCH.

We hope you’ll never need it—but we’re so glad it’s here if you do!

7 years in the planning		18 months from breaking ground to completion		68 patient beds
	1 milk management room, where technicians can fortify breast milk with extra calories and nutrients	400+ physicians, nurses, and other professionals dedicated to providing the most compassionate, effective care possible	8 specially designed “couplet care” rooms, equipped to care for new mothers and their babies— together	
1 dedicated, in-unit operating room for complex medical procedures		32 single rooms, each with dedicated space for parents to sleep		24/7 hours the in-unit, dedicated pharmacy provides services
				1 state-of-the- art simulation/ education center for training

613 generous donors made it possible with gifts of \$20.65 million

THANK YOU

Inside the new NICU

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:

Family lounge for relaxing and grabbing a snack

Patient rooms have convertible sofas for new parents to stay overnight with their babies

Sophisticated in-unit **procedure room** minimizes transport of fragile infants

24/7 **on-site pharmacy** for rapid preparation of medications

"Couplet care" rooms allow both mom and newborn to receive medical care in the same room

➔ Visit vimeo.com/259165562 for an in-depth video tour of the new NICU, featuring comments from our medical staff.



**YOUR GIFTS
SUPPORT OUR
AMAZING
PROFESSIONALS**

NICU nurse Megan Ryan helps parents through the unimaginable

"IF YOU DON'T EXPERIENCE IT, you really can't know what it's like," says Megan Ryan, RN, Yale New Haven Children's Hospital. "Yet, it's a place you never want to have to go."

She's talking about the NICU, where we care for the tiniest, sickest, most fragile newborns.

Sloane and Gavin Spanierman's baby was rushed to the NICU in early 2016. Born three and a half months early, Jemma weighed only 1 1/4 pounds. Megan was her primary nurse.

"There's nothing you can say to fix it," says Megan, "but we try to make it the most positive experience it can be. Because whatever happens, these are the memories they're going to have."

Megan makes sure parents have good memories by involving them in their baby's care as much as possible—taking their baby's temperature, helping change the sheets. "One day, Megan put sunglasses on Jemma to show me what she looked like under bilirubin lights—a funny and wonderful memory," says Sloane.



Megan received the 2017 Compassionate Care Award from the Hope After Loss support organization

Megan spent nearly 12 hours a day with the Spaniermans. "If there was anything we didn't understand about her care, Megan would explain," says Sloane. "She was like Jemma's parent when we couldn't be there. She loved her as much as we did."

Tragically, Jemma passed away after 21 days of fighting for her life.

Megan was there the morning Jemma died, she attended her funeral, and she even helped raise money in

"I owe this award to all the amazing people who staff the NICU. They are all just as deserving, if not more so," says Megan. "Especially my fellow nurses, who I am still learning from every day."

Jemma's memory for Hope After Loss, a support group for parents who have experienced the loss of a pregnancy or infant. She has remained a close and caring friend to Sloane and Gavin.

When Sloane learned about Hope After Loss's annual award for outstanding compassion shown by a caregiver to a family that's had a loss, she felt deeply that Megan deserved it. Sloane nominated Megan, who ultimately was chosen to receive the award.

Today, Sloane and Gavin are the proud parents of Liev, a thriving baby boy who was born last August. "Megan was so supportive throughout my second pregnancy, answering countless anxious questions," says Sloane. "She even came to visit Liev and me in the hospital on her day off!" ♥



**YES! I want to help
preemies and sick
newborns like Arynn and
Ethan beat the odds.**

Thank you!

Please return this form with your tax-deductible gift or use the enclosed reply form.

Here is my gift of: \$ _____

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ADDRESS _____

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PHONE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____