

# BROWN BOYS Benefit Cinco De Mayo

Saturday, May 3, 2025  
Brown Boys Benefit 501(c)3--81-5087973

## OUR STORY

There is nothing in life more exciting than pregnancy. Sure, it is also terrifying, exhausting, and every other adjective associated with growing a delicate life inside of you; but in the moment when new parents lay their eyes on their beautiful baby for the first time, fear subsides, and pure joy fills the soul. A normal pregnancy lasts about 40 weeks, which seems like the perfect amount of time to prepare. But not all pregnancies culminate in that moment of pure joy.

Our first Son, Colton, was born at only 24 weeks. When we laid eyes on our beautiful baby boy for the first time, he was 1 pound and 8 ounces... 11.5 inches long. He was so fragile, we had to be careful even touching him. He had many complications: He needed a ventilator to breathe, a tube to eat, he had perforated bowels, a brain bleed, his heart and lungs were not developed, and the list goes on. Yes, there was joy when we met our baby boy, and he was so loved, but that fear did not dissipate. All we could do was worry about our tiny and delicate Son. The next 9 days in the NICU were some of the worst of our lives. We felt powerless and alone as Colton fought for his life. Terrified, exhausted, desperate, angry, alone; we felt it all. 10 days after we met our Son, Colton, he passed into heaven... right after we were able to hold him for the first time. We arrived at the hospital pregnant. 10 grueling days later, we left without our baby.

Afterwards, we decided to move to the Twin Cities. Immediately upon hearing the joyous news of my second pregnancy, I was put in the high-risk category. This meant over 2 months of bed rest, Progesterone shots to stop contractions, and lung surfactants during my second trimester. It meant doing anything to give our baby a chance. After just 28 weeks, we laid eyes on our son, Ryland. He was 2 pounds and 12 ounces. Another joyous moment, another loved baby boy, another bout in the NICU, with every struggle that brought. Ryland needed a nasal cannula and then a si-pap to breath. He needed a tube to eat. He needed blood transfusion, suffered infections, and had to fight every day. For 62 days we fought alongside him in the NICU. It felt like a lifetime. But 62 days after we met our son Ryland, we brought him home to be a family. Despite it all, the fear, the exhaustion, the anger... we had our moment of pure joy. Today, thanks to God and the staff of that NICU, Ryland is a junior in High School. He plays hockey, he loves football like his dad, he loves cooking with his mom, and is the joy of our lives.

The fear surrounding pregnancy is compounded when preterm labor becomes a reality. Almost 5,000 mothers in Minnesota experience this reality each year. This means that, each year, almost 5,000 families in Minnesota suffer through that same fear, anger, and desperation we did, and each year, 5,000 babies fight for their lives in NICUs across Minnesota, like ours did. We decided that we could not stand ideal while one mother, family, or baby endured the same experience we did, let alone 5,000. We are proud to say that, over the last 17 years, Brown Boys Benefit, the non-profit we started to honor our Boys, has donated over \$1.4 million to support NICU mothers, families, and babies. These donations have helped change how families experience the NICU by providing tangible and comprehensive support in the form of founding and funding the NICU Family Support Programs at Children's Minnesota Hospital in St. Paul, Children's Minnesota Hospital in Minneapolis, and Mercy Hospital in Coon Rapids. Brown Boys Benefit also funds and contributes to the NICU Family Support Program, the Breast Milk Equity Project, the NICU Lactation Care Kits program, and the Perinatal Mental Health Project at the Masonic Children's Hospital's NICU. Additionally, Brown Boys Benefit provides individual hospital and family grants to provide things like Christmas presents for NICU families, Mother's Day flowers for NICU moms, and financial support for families while their babies are in the NICU. With your support, we will continue to bolster mothers, families, and babies in their fight for life. The mission of Brown Boys Benefit is simple. It's to support the incredible work that NICUs across Minnesota are doing. It's to give resources and support to mothers like me and families like ours. It's to keep babies like Ryland healthy. It's to save babies like Colton. Simply, it's for the babies.