



2015 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Art, Writing & Multimedia Contest

Anna Norton (9th Grade)
Magnificat High School
Principal, Renata Rafferty
Teacher, Amy Dorn

A Dream of My Own

On March 2, 2000, my two sisters and I were born. Unlike most babies, who are then put into their mother's arms, we were immediately rushed to the Newborn Intensive Care Unit of the Fairview Hospital. Being eight weeks premature, we needed life support to survive. I was incubated in order to breathe, fed through an IV, and put in a heated isolate to keep my two pound 14 ounce body warm enough to survive. Even under these circumstances, we were the lucky ones. We had the proper care and the resources to survive. Without any complications, all we needed to do was to grow. Not all babies are so fortunate.

According to the CDC, one of every nine babies born in the United States is born premature. Infants are considered premature if they are born before thirty-seven weeks of pregnancy. Problems that many of these infants face are: breathing problems, cerebral palsy, vision delay, feeding difficulties, developmental delays, and hearing impairments. Some characteristics linked with preterm birth are social, economic, and personal characteristics including, high or low maternal age, low income or socioeconomic standings, and black race. Medical conditions during pregnancy, such as infections, high blood pressure, and carrying multiples can affect the preterm birth. Lastly, the mother's own behavior can affect a baby's birth. These behaviors include stress, substance abuse, tobacco and alcohol use, and lack of or late prenatal care.

I have a dream. My dream is to raise awareness to the causes of premature births and help insure that all premature babies get the care that they need just like I did. There are many ways I can fulfill my dream. My family has been involved in fundraising for the Fairview Hospital's newborn Intensive Care Unit since I was four years old. My mother and grandmother have been in charge of a large fundraising event called Gift of Life, which raises money and awareness for premature babies, and my sisters and I have helped with it in numerous ways. Over many years, we have helped set up and gather auction items for an annual gala that raised money for critical equipment and support for the NICU. We have also worked directly with former patients at smaller family events by hosting games and playing with the kids. I look forward to continuing to help give back to the NICU that saved my life fourteen years ago.

I can also raise awareness through my school, Magnificat High School. I could see if Magnificat would be willing to donate a small amount of each sale from the bookstore to "The Gift of Life" or to a similar organization that the school may prefer. With permission from the school, I could also set up a fundraiser. For every student who brought in \$2 to donate to the organization, they would receive a dress down day.

We all have dreams of what we would like to achieve in our lives. Some are small, but all can make a big difference. My dream is that all premature babies have the chance to get a healthy start, grow up, and have their own dreams. Who knows what their dreams may be, but they have the potential to change the world.

"I Have A Dream"

