

PRESS RELEASE

All eyes turn to the smallest of the small

1st International Prematurity Awareness Day on 17 November calls for higher public awareness of the situation of millions of preterm infants



Munich, 12.11.2009 (ps) – **They all started life in the same way: premature babies Albert Einstein and Stevie Wonder, Mike Krüger and Inka Bause were all born prematurely. Today they are celebrity representatives of the largest group**

of patients in children's medical care. Around 60,000 babies, 10 per cent of all births, are born prematurely every year in Germany alone. 17 November has been designated the 1st International Prematurity Awareness Day by the European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants (EFCNI), a Europe-wide non-profit organization based in Munich. The primary objective of this occasion for the smallest of our fellow human beings is to raise awareness of the problems of preterm infants among the broad general public, in addition to collecting donations for the work of the Foundation.

Stars for preterm infants

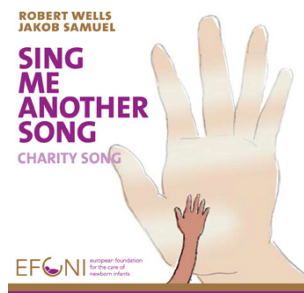
The world is full of celebrity premature babies who have achieved great things despite their difficult start in life. Soul legend **Stevie Wonder** is among them, his blindness a consequence of his prematurity. Others are actors **Jonathan Rhys-Meyers** and **Sarah Biasini** (daughter of Romy Schneider), fashion superstar **Jil Sander** and Sixties anti-establishment icon **Uschi Obermaier**. Many famous names also play an active role in campaigning for preterm infants; in France, **Jean Sarkozy**, son of the President and a preterm infant himself, will support a benefit dinner for parents' association SOSPréma on 17 November.

Germany rallies round

On 17 November, German news presenter **Steffen Seibert**, himself father of a preterm infant, will officially open the foyer of the Darmstadt Children's Clinic, custom-designed to fulfil the needs of parents and children. A specially equipped children's ambulance financed by donation campaigns by the Ulm Parent and Preterm Group will be put into operation. And in Augsburg, the "Bunter Kreis" support network for preterm and sick

children will be joined by the "Harlekin" aftercare model, in which Arbeitsstelle Frühförderung Bayern (Bavarian Early Intervention Agency) works with Bavarian early intervention organizations and children's clinics to build a network of support and care for families with preterm infants, including medical, psycho-social and nursing care tailored to the infant's or family's specific needs. Finally, Hanover's Marktkirche church is staging an exhibition of photographs by top photographer **Walter Schels**. All parents' associations and institutions for preterm infants are called on to mark the day with special activities.

Benefit gala and charity song



At a grand benefit gala held in Munich on 12 November to mark the 1st International Prematurity Awareness Day, Swedish star pianist **Robert Wells**, himself the father of a preterm infant, and rock musician Jakob Samuel will enthral the audience. The highlight of the evening will be the premiere of the exclusive benefit song "Sing Me Another Song", available for downloading at iTunes, Amazon and musicload.de from 1 December 2009. At the after-show party, guests can experience outstanding "open cooking" by celebrity chef **Stefan Marquard**.

Global attention

Activities and campaigns throughout Europe are giving clear impetus for the situation of the smallest patients of all to move into the focus of social and political attention. The Danish Parents' Association is organizing a concert in Copenhagen with celebrity artists; in Portugal preterms have their own TV show; and in Belgium information stands will be set up in clinics and gifts distributed to neonatology intensive-care wards. Famous US organization March of Dimes has launched the special idea of a website enabling donators to create personalized "virtual armbands" in the name of children they love, with an alphabetical list of named donations already made.

EFCNI thanks global healthcare company Abbott for its support in realizing the 1st International Prematurity Awareness Day.

The European Foundation for the Care of Newborn Infants (EFCNI) is both a network for everyone involved with preterm and sick newborns, and a forum for scientists. Its declared objective is to bring about long-term improvement in the care situation for these infants, helping to ensure that Europe's largest group of child patients receive the attention and the lobby they deserve. More information at www.efcni.org.

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