

Suggested Lead: A new report shows premature birth is at an all-time high in the United States. The March of Dimes says prematurity is the number one killer of America’s newborns and has declared November Prematurity Awareness Month. Sonia Martin shows what the organization is doing about it and how you can get involved.

Chyron	Audio
	(1) Announcer: She only weighed one pound four ounces when she was born – 15 weeks premature. But Alexa Ostolaza’s parents say she was a fighter from the start -- and she won her 108 day battle for life in the neonatal intensive care unit.
Jessica Ostolaza Gave Birth 15 Weeks Early March of Dimes 2006 National Ambassador Mom	(2) Jessica Ostolaza: It was probably the hardest 108 days that we have ever had to go through. But yet, we are still struggling on a day-to-day basis.
	(3) Announcer: Now five-years-old, Alexa goes to weekly therapy for mild cerebral palsy and has a permanent shunt in her brain. But she’s strong enough to step up her constant battle against prematurity – now as the new 2006 March of Dimes National Ambassador.
Jennifer L. Howse, PhD President, March of Dimes	(4) Dr. Jennifer Howse: There’s a real urgency to raise public awareness about the problem of prematurity. It’s common, it’s costly, it’s serious. Last year’s data shows that half a million babies were born premature
	(5) Announcer: The March of Dimes recently launched a new awareness campaign called “I Want My 9 Months” -- teaming up with superstar recording artist Thalia to spread the message – in English and Spanish -- that all babies need their 9 months to get a healthy start.
Thalia March of Dimes Celebrity	(6) Thalia: I think the best gift you can give a baby is a full nine months of

<p>Spokesperson</p>	<p>pregnancy. Women need to know the importance of talking to their doctors even before getting pregnant.</p>
	<p>(7) Announcer: The campaign includes 9 things women should ask their doctors about such as how diabetes, high blood pressure and various medications can affect pregnancy.</p>
	<p>(8) Nat Pop: (Jessica talking to Alexa)</p>
	<p>(9) Announcer: But even women – like Jessica Ostolaza -- who do everything right can still have a premature birth – that’s because half the causes of prematurity are still unknown -- so the March of Dimes is also investing in research to find out why babies are born too soon.</p>
	<p>(10) Jessica Ostolaza: One more family having to deal with this, is one too many, you know? It, it’s one too many. Nobody else needs to go through this.</p>
	<p>(11) Announcer: I’m Sonia Martin.</p>

Suggested Tag: For more information about premature birth and Prematurity Awareness Month, go to www.marchofdimes.com.

Additional Soundbites:

**Jennifer Howse, PhD
President, March of Dimes**

The most important thing is to invest in research. We’ve got to find out why women go into preterm labor so we can develop the interventions. Meanwhile, it’s very important for women to get very good prenatal care – ask the nine questions that would place them at risk.

It’s very important to reach out very specifically to the communities that are most effected, the Hispanic community is the fastest growing minority community in the country. And that’s why it’s so important for us to be able to reach out with messages for the Hispanic community.

**Thalia
March of Dimes Celebrity Spokesperson**

Women need to know what they can do to reduce their risks of having a premature baby. That's why the March of Dimes is doing this bilingual campaign because we want to reach as many women as we can, especially women in my community.

**Jessica Ostolaza
Gave Birth 15 Weeks Early**

I think people think that babies are born small, and that it's something very easy to overcome. Maybe that it's just kind of a weight and, you know, small issue. I don't think that people realize the long-term effects that prematurity has, and the struggles and the fights that the family and everybody around them have to, to deal with, on a day-to-day basis.

**Josué Ostolaza
Father of Premature Daughter, Alexa**

She was so early that her eyes were still fused shut and she had like little sunglasses on. And so it was overwhelming to see all that, and you, once again I, I feel helpless. There's nothing I can do but trust in the, the people that are there to take care of her.

I felt I had to be strong. [CRIES] And when I would work, I'd find a, a clearing somewhere. Nobody saw my car. And I'd sit there and cry.

Spanish Soundbites:

**Thalia
Cantante, Atriz y Portavoz Para March of Dimes**

Estoy muy emocionada de ser parte de esta gran campaña bilingüe que March of Dimes está lanzando para alcanzar a todo las mujeres especialmente las mujeres en la comunidad Latina para crear conciencia cerca de lo que es el nacimiento prematuro.

(I'm very excited to be part of this big bilingual campaign that the March of Dimes is launching to reach all women, especially the women in the Latin community to create a conciousness around premature birth.)

Uno de cada ocho bebés Hispanos nacen prematuros, entonces es un índice muy elevado. Y las mujeres tienen que tener un poco mas conciencia antes de quedar embarazadas para tratar de controlar lo que es el nacimiento de bebés prematuros. Medio de millón de bebés nacen prematuros cada año y eso es un estastica enorme.

(One out of eight Hispanic babies are born premature, this is a very elevated rate. And women have to have a little more consciousness before they become pregnant to try and control premature birth. Half a million babies are born premature each year and this is a enormous statistic.)

El nacimiento prematuro es la causa principal de muerte en los recién nacidos. Yo les ruego todas las mujeres que se informan, que pregunte a su doctor, que leen, que buscan antes de quedan embarazadas. Nueve meses son indispensables en un embarazo saludable.

(Premature birth is the principal cause of death in newborns. I urge all women to inform themselves, ask your doctor, read, research before becoming pregnant. Nine months is crucial for a healthy pregnancy.)

Josué Ostolaza
Padre de Hija Nacida Prematura
Embajadoro Nacional de March of Dimes

La mayoría de la gente no sabe, o no pienso que sabe todo lo que es en una hija o un hijo que nace temprano. Todo piensan que después que salen del hospital todo está bien y viva una vida normal. Y para mucha familias no es así.

(Most people do not know, or I do not think that everyone knows what it is to have a daughter or a son who is born early. Everyone thinks that after that they leave the hospital everything is well and lives a normal life. And for many families it is not like that.)

Para ella a ser la carita para March of Dimes este año es un orgullo. Y que sea la primera Hispana es un orgullo también

(For her to being the little face for March of Dimes this year is an honor. And that she is the first Hispanic is an honor also.)