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A family walks for babies

BY MADELAINE WONG

A **WATTLE Grove** family will join thousands of people across the country in the **Walk for Prems** on Sunday, October 28.

The annual event supports **Life's Little Treasures Foundation**, a charity which helps families of babies born sick or prior to 37 weeks gestation and this year they hope to raise \$300,000.

Mother of three **Jane Moukhallalati** said it was a personal event for her family. Her twin girls are 16 and her son is 11 and they were all premature babies.

"When it happened I had support from the nurses in the Intensive Care Unit and that's why this is important to me," Mrs Moukhallalati said.

"I was petrified when I went into labour at 28 weeks with the twins. They would've been very premature but, thankfully, with medical intervention they were able to help us and they put me on steroids and bed-rest which gave us more time.

"However, I was told they would need to perform an emergency caesarean because I had pre-eclampsia and my blood pressure was too high."

Her health complications included liver damage and asthma and she was concerned for the babies' safety.

"They were in intensive care for three weeks and had to be fed by nasal tube. It was a horrible time because of the unknown - I didn't know

if they were going to hit the normal milestones."

She said it really struck her when she left hospital without them.

"In the first year it was full on but they caught up to all the milestones and they're doing great now. The entire

experience was humbling and it made me realise how precious life is. But also being a mum, you tend to get up and you get on with it.

"Something that still sticks with me is when I was put

under for the operation. My twins were taken away from me straight away.

"Because we didn't get the initial bonding time I felt like I let them down. It's supposed to be an important time."

Her son's birth went more smoothly.

"With him I elected to be conscious during the caesarean so I wouldn't miss out."

Mrs Moukhallalati said she was thankful that everything turned out OK because the reality is not every family's experience ends well.

"I know people who had twins and only delivered one living one.

"I've known friends and family who've lost many babies so I feel lucky. I think my husband and I are stronger for it now.

"That's a big reason why we're going on this walk - for mothers experiencing it now. I've always been open about it with hopes I could help someone else get through it.

"A dove will be released

at the beginning for babies who've been lost and I think that'll touch us all."

■ walkforprems.org.au



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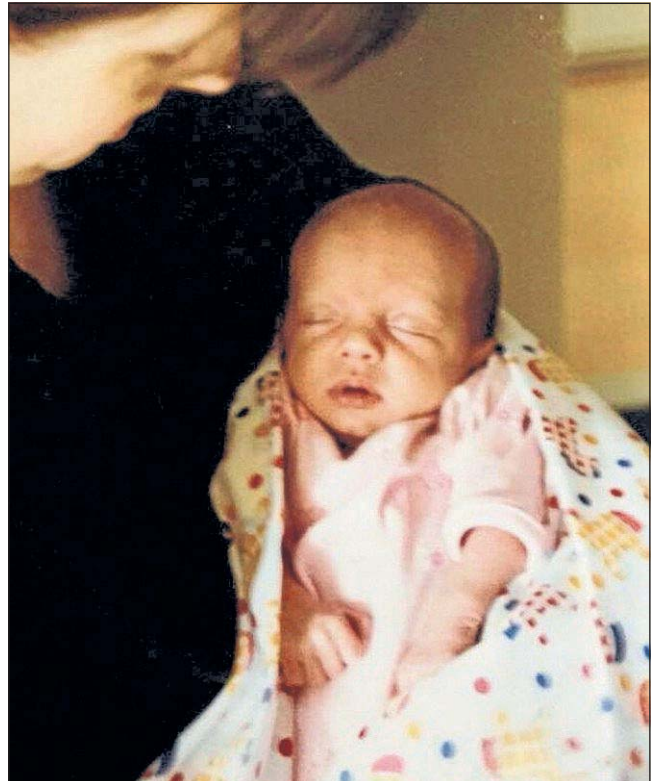
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ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY: The Wattle Grove family will all participate in the Walk for Prems. Here are Jane and Izzat Moukhallalati with children Brianna, Daniel and Chloe.



A MEMORY FROM THE PAST: Mother Jane Moukhallalati with one of her twin daughters who were born four weeks premature.