

# BEE MIGHTY: Helping defy the odds

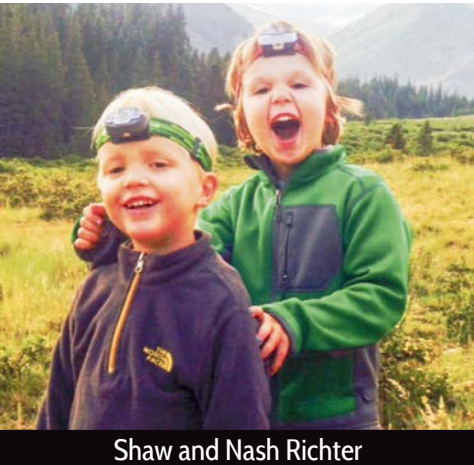
Written by Katie Toussaint | Photo by Candace Richter

“There are milestones that you celebrate. First, you celebrate the fact that you can hold them.” Three years ago, Candace Richter found that even her touch as a mother could be too much for her newborn child—and other premature babies like him. “I couldn’t hold Shaw for the first five days,” she said. “He was very critical.”

Her husband, Michael, could not hold his son for a month.

Shaw was born at Novant Health Presbyterian Medical Center at 27 weeks. He had a stroke at birth, he has hydrocephalus and he has undergone two brain surgeries, life support and intubation.

Their schedules were overturned. Every morning, the two parents had breakfast with their firstborn, Nash, who is a year older than Shaw. They spent days and nights at the hospital, with a break at home for dinner and prayers.



Shaw and Nash Richter

After 122 days in the NICU, Shaw finally came home. But a new battle started. Like other NICU survivors, he required medical therapy and equipment to continue developing. He was on a breathing monitor for a year and went to therapy four times each week.

A separate stressor surfaced: private insurance covered only a marginal part of the escalating medical costs. Candace stopped working and the Richters became a single-income family, but one that was not eligible for Medicaid. “It’s hundreds of thousands of dollars in therapy,” Candace said.

And she noticed they weren’t the only parents struggling. She heard too many stories of parents choosing which therapies to provide for their children based on their finances.

Fired up by frustration, Candace founded Bee Mighty, a fund under Novant Health Foundation, to financially assist other parents of NICU survivors, whether they are infants, younger children or teens. Since its launch in November 2012, Bee Mighty has raised \$176,000 in gross contributions, with 97 percent of expenses allocated to therapy for NICU survivors. During its first year, the fund brought in enough money to support 15 NICU survivors. So far in 2014, the fund has already supported 27.

Now Shaw is three. He is still hit with health problems and is hospitalized every cold and flu season. He is in horse therapy, aqua therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy.

But Shaw jogs around the backyard with his brother. He glides down slides. “We were told that he may not walk or talk,” Candace recalled from her days at the hospital. But Shaw’s therapies have made him stronger. “He is running and happy,” she said. “It’s amazing. He just has defied so many odds.”

Bee Mighty ensures that other NICU survivors do the same.

Learn more: [www.beemighty.org](http://www.beemighty.org)

## Support: Bee Mighty’s 2nd annual fundraiser

**What:** Bee Something For Bee Mighty, a night of dinner, dancing and diamonds, in tandem with World Prematurity Day.

**When:** November 15, 7p.m.-11p.m.

**Bee Jeweled:** By Diamonds Direct in \$3,000 worth of diamonds!

**Bee a Beach Bum:** With your friends and family in a private beach home.

**Bee Surprised:** By over \$6,000 in raffle items.

**Bee Inspired:** By the lives we are changing.

**Bee There:** Tickets @ [www.beesomethingforbeemighty.com](http://www.beesomethingforbeemighty.com)

**Bee Mighty:** It’s all the buzz.

## FASHION TIPS FROM TODD



**Fiction:** Well-dressed women are born with a sense of style.

**Fact:** With a little guidance and a few timeless pieces, most women can dress with confidence for any occasion.

Personal style is the way you speak to the world without words. Occasionally even the best of us get tongue-tied. Whether it’s dressing for work or pulling out all the stops for a charity gala, choosing our clothes and accessories can sometimes be stressful. What about the constantly changing “rules of fashion”? How about the celebrities telling us what to wear...and what not to wear. Just who are the experts judging us as we walk our personal red carpets?

Tim Gunn, educator, author and fashion mentor once did a closet makeover on a woman who was trapped in the fashion past. Each season brings a new list of “must haves”. Yet according to Sue Leeson, a spokesman for the QVC shopping channel, a recent survey reveals that most women have at least \$500 worth of clothes in their closet they’ve either never worn or refuse to wear again.

Let’s put all that aside and think about what it really means to get dressed up for an event. It’s a combination of looking good on the outside and feeling good on the inside. When you put together a look you like, have the confidence to carry it through and let your choices enhance that confidence.

*“Elegance is a question of personality more than one’s clothing.”*  
Jean-Paul Gaultier