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### **WTNH-8 Anchor Helps Parents of Premies Find a Quiet Place**

By Joe Amarante

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The scene was a packed Geppi's restaurant in Fair Haven 11 months ago. I was enjoying my one and only night as a waiter. I like being around good food so much, it's fun to just serve it to others, I found.

Anyway, at this fund-raiser for a little Hamden boy battling a rare genetic disorder, family and friends looked up amid Italian food and raffle prizes to see Jocelyn Maminta.

The WTNH-8 anchor saluted the family support effort that evening; she said some encouraging words and concluded her remarks with something you don't see often from a news anchor: tears.

The emotion was real, in case you're wondering. Maminta has been there. In addition to the two children she has with husband, Gary Doyens, Maminta gave birth to a third child (named Caroline), whose short life is having a growing impact at hospitals in Connecticut and elsewhere.

That story begins in 1997, when Maminta was in her first tour at the Elm City TV station and hosting the morning news with Keith Kountz. Maminta, her mother and father were shopping at a store in East Haven.

Maminta's father, a doctor, had come to America decades before from the Philippines seeking opportunity for his seven children, who should all become doctors, he figured. They settled in St. Louis, and three would become doctors. His wife and another child went into nursing, too, so it's no surprise that Maminta does health and medical stories today in addition to anchoring.

Maminta herself took pre-med courses as a young lady, but eventually majored in political science before following her love of sports to TV sportscasting and then newscasting. Already the mother of toddler on that fateful day in 1997, her second pregnancy was suddenly going terribly wrong after 30 weeks.

"It was very traumatic for me, as well as the baby, because my placenta abrupted in that Asian grocery store. I started bleeding heavily. I had just been, two days before, diagnosed with toxemia. My parents rushed me to the hospital emergency room... It was horrible, probably the worst thing I've every had to experience in my life."

Doctors had to do an emergency Caesarean section. Caroline, who had development issues already, they discovered, was under 2 pounds at birth.

"She was doing really well for about a month, and then she developed NEC (necrotizing enterocolitis); her intestines weren't developing well, were perforated, and then infection set in," Maminta says. Emergency surgery followed.



"When my doctors told me about it, I was in this cold, sterile breastfeeding room in the unit. I had no idea what they were telling me, I was so numb. It was almost like an out-of-body experience. I could hear them but... They were saying she's in serious trouble and she may not make it.

"They were being very tactful... and I said, 'Are you trying to tell me my baby might die?' I had to basically ask them bluntly because I want to know the truth. And she made it through that surgery and was with us a few more weeks after that. She fought hard, she really did."

Months after Caroline died, Maminta and her husband (a development official at CPTV today) wanted to do something for the neonatal intensive care unit at Yale-New Haven Hospital where Caroline had spent her two months and one day of life.

"We knew the doctors had done all they could. ... And we wanted to do something for families who follow in our footsteps," said Maminta. They decided on a "Caroline's Room" to be constructed amid the unit.

They decided on a room because "when Caroline was dying in our arms, they put up this partition. And that was all that was shielding us from everyone else. Sure, the other parents were asked to leave the area, but all we had was that cloth partition in the middle of all these babies trying to survive."

After putting a small Caroline's Room at Yale-New Haven, the couple eventually opened three more at hospitals in Texas (where her husband's job had led them after two years in Milwaukee TV). The fifth Caroline's Room opened in June at the Children's Medical Center at Hartford Hospital. There are plans to open more, too, one at a medical center in Roanoke, Va., another at Danbury Hospital, and then other places around the country.

"It's like a living room, a safe haven for families where they can go and talk to their doctors in private, where they can perhaps hold that baby for the first time and maybe the last time," Maminta says. "It could be the place where the baby is baptized. In this room, if it is perhaps that moment where we know the baby is no longer going to be living, grandparents and parents and uncles, everybody can come and see the baby in private. And that's what it's all about, giving families that dignity, that privacy that you need."

When the opportunity came up in 2002, Maminta jumped at the chance to return to WTNH (News Channel 8).

"I only wanted to make one more move," she says. "I have a young family, and I wanted to have roots somewhere and I felt Connecticut was the place to be."

Her TV travels had taken her to Washington, D.C., North Carolina, Wisconsin and Texas. So why choose Connecticut again?

"I just felt that God was telling me to be here," she says. "We had lost Caroline before we moved to Milwaukee in 1997, and so when everything came together to come back to Connecticut, it was almost as if God was saying to me, 'You need to go back to Connecticut; this is where you need to be.' And I had just had Campbell (her 5-year-old, born in late 2001) so it was almost full circle for me."

Full circle, indeed. Her co-anchor on the 5 p.m. news these days is her former 5 a.m. co-anchor, Keith Kountz, in his second tour at State and Elm streets.



"It wonderful that Keith and I are paired up again," Maminta says. "Five a.m. to 5 p.m. — it's great. Coming home again and pairing with Keith made it so easy."

But life isn't easy these days in local media. Does she worry about ratings?

"Sure, I look at them every day. We get the overnights. It's part of the business. Both Keith and I are very competitive. We like doing well. We're a strong No. 2 right now."

No. 2 in household ratings, maybe, but Maminta is No. 1 with the demo of families with premature babies.

You can donate to Caroline's Room through the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, Inc., 70 Audubon St. New Haven, CT 06510.