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**Chapter Two
One Month Old,
First PDA Surgery**

♥ November 16, 2004 at 06:42 PM CST

Good Evening Everyone,

Mommy and Daddy here...we are back at the Ronald McDonald House. We found out at 3:30 pm that Blake's surgery would have to be postponed until tomorrow (Wed.) Unfortunately the cardiologist is dealing with someone else who really needs our prayers also. The surgery occurring before Blake's was going to extend into the evening. All of us are taking this in stride and will be looking forward to tomorrow. Blake is resting easy and doing fine. Though a little nervous, both Mommy and Daddy are doing better now too.

The famous Luc will be on Blake duty tomorrow...and he has always gotten Blake through the tough days, as has all his great nurses and doctors. We'll keep up the positive energy and prayers for a few more days. We love you all, and look forward to giving you all a great report in the near future. God bless.

Good Night, and many thanks.

Chad & Kimberly :)

PS- I jumped the gun a little in my last report...Blake is actually 14-1/2" long. You go boy!

♥ **November 17, 2004 at 04:36 PM CST**

Aunt Becky here. I hope you all get this before you go home for the day. Blake underwent surgery to correct his PDA at 2:00 this afternoon. At 3:15 Grandma Mary called me from the hospital to say that everything went perfectly and the surgeon was pleased with the outcome. Thank GOD!!!

Blake may have a couple of stormy days ahead since it will be an adjustment for his heart and lungs. To this point, they have been working extra hard to compensate and now that the PDA is closed, his heart and lungs may experience a bit of shock from not having to work as hard. Kim says this is normal and to be expected. We'll keep you updated in the days ahead as I'm sure Kim and Chad will be spending long hours at the hospital while Blake recovers.

Thank you so much for all of your concern and prayers. It nearly brings me to tears every time I log on to make an update and see all the caring messages you all send. It is absolutely wonderful for Blake, Kim, Chad and our entire family to have people like you in our lives. God Bless You ALL!!

XOXO,
Becky

♥ **November 18, 2004 at 11:01 AM CST**

Hello to all my caring friends & family,

Chad, Blake and I are so lucky to have all of you praying for us. I truly don't think I could get out of bed every morning or stay strong in the room with Blake if I didn't have you all & of course God the Almighty with us in mind and spirit. Blake is such a precious little boy and I look forward to the day you all will meet him when he is happy and healthy.

He had a little bit of a stormy night, just as the doctors had expected. He is now on a blood pressure med again to increase his BP. His O2 requirements have been up and down. We pray that everything will become more stable as the day goes on... The doctors are rounding on him as I type this message. Luc his nurse was turning him as I left the unit and Blake looked very peaceful. The surgeon came by to check on him and was pleased with Blake at this time.

I cannot put into words the thanks I have for the staff that have been taking care of Blake. They have become our extended family. I already imagine Blake's Birthday next year at a hall or gym (Trinity's????) We will invite all of you and the staff in the NICU.

I Love you all and please continue the prayer circle.

Love,

Kimberly :)

♥ **November 19, 2004 at 11:09 AM CST**

Hello from Mommy,

Blake had a great night and morning. I'm actually still at the Ronald McDonald house-washing clothes and sheets, so we can possibly go home tonight. I love all of you. Blake weighed in at 3lb 1 oz last night, still a little bit of swelling, but he is peeing like a racehorse!!!!

Talk to you soon.

Love,

Kimberly :)

♥ **November 19, 2004 at 04:23 PM CST**

Good Friday Afternoon All,

Daddy just spoke to nurse Luc and Kimberly and is very pleased to pass on another good report. The cardiologist reviewed this morning's echocardiogram with Kimberly and remains pleased with Blake's heart functions. The PDA clamp did its job and has improved the oxygen saturation in his blood. He believes the VSD's, (Ventricular Septal Defects) or small pin holes between the ventricles, will close in time as Blake's heart grows. (no additional surgeries) Dr. Zeb is also very pleased with Blake's general health.

He started Blake back on a very, very small amount of Mommy's milk, 1 CC. Blake's bladder functions continue to work well; many diaper changes

throughout the day. The soft ocean sounds seem to be doing the trick. Blake is holding strong at 3 lbs. and with more nutrients should continue to grow big and strong.

I have to share my father/son moment with you all from last night. As I watched over his bed by myself, as his nurse and mommy had stepped out of the room for a moment, I noticed Blake moving his fingers slightly. Remember, Blake has been sedated since his surgery. As I put the tip of my pinky finger in his little palm, he suddenly gripped around my finger with a surprisingly strong grip. To my shock his oxygen saturation improved to 100% and for a brief moment he opened his eyes for me.

I feel Blake was in his own way telling me that he was doing fine Daddy and knew that I was there with him. Needless to say, I was emotionally moved to tears from the overwhelming relief of our son's strength and steadily improving health. As monumental as Mommy getting to hold Blake in her arms for the first time, this brief moment will be forever engraved in my heart.

Thank you all for your continued prayers and support.

Good Weekend to you all, & remember...take time to enjoy the little things.

Daddy



♥ **November 20, 2004 at 02:41 PM CST**

Hello everyone, Well Chad & I actually came home last night, although I still have a room at the Ronald McDonald house. I felt secure since Luc took such good care of him all day and the night nurse Heather as well. (Luc I took your advice to GO HOME, Don't be BLUE Ohio State is winning in the 3rd quarter-2:20, we want to see you on Monday to take care of Blake).

Blake hit another milestone last night. He did his first push-up and turned his head on his own for the first time. Daddy about passed out, but I knew the nurse would not let the endotracheal tube come out. Dr. Lloyd and Nurse Heather were very proud of him and shocked. I continue to be amazed with our son's strength. He is definitely a fighter and independent. I don't know where he gets that from???

Today it has been raining most of the day, so we have been calling in to the hospital. I feel so secure when Tanya and Lori are there with him also. Tanya said he is resting and needs very low stimuli. It is difficult to be away from him. At this time being quiet and leaving the room dark is best for him. We are trying to catch up on things around the house and relax.

I hope everyone has a great weekend. I wish everyone safe travels during this holiday season.

Love, Kimberly :)

♥ **November 21, 2004 at 07:10 PM CST**

Hello,

Chad & I have spent the last several hours with Blake and his nurse Laurel. Blake is having a great day!! We are so proud of him. When we arrived, it was time for a diaper change--perfect timing! I was able to change it just fine. He has graduated to a larger diaper!!!! Tonight the nurse will weigh and measure him, so get ready for the results. Blake has been tolerating the feedings (milk) very well. I'm glad because I have so much milk in the freezer.

I hope everyone has a wonderful Thanksgiving week!!

Love you all,
Kimberly :)

♥ **November 22, 2004 at 09:57 PM CST**

Good Evening, Sorry for the late entry. Well, another great day with Blake! You better get your tissue out now. Today I had another special moment with my son.

I told Luc (Nurse in Boots) that I wish I could just pick him up and kiss him. We just feel so much out of control of this situation. Luc said you can kiss him. I was amazed, because I didn't want to stress Blake out. Luc allowed me to place my hand under his tiny body; it was close enough to holding him as I can at this time. Luc left the room and closed the door so

I could have this special moment with my son. It was magical kissing Blake's forehead for the first time. I become tearful just thinking of the moment.

Thank God for this special miracle of mine. His skin is so soft and smelled so good. How do you describe the smell of a newborn?? I truly have so many things to be thankful for this Thanksgiving. My Hope at the end of the rainbow--Blake. My caring and loving husband, Chad. Wait to you see Chad with his son, it is clearly lovely and tender. You will see how proud he is of his first-born son.

I'm so thankful for my Mom& Dad, Michelle, Michael, Becky, Mike, Brooks, Kristen, Jessica, Gregory, Judy, Ron (mom & dad Johnson) Sasha, Craig, Chase, Catch, ALL my relatives, friends and ALL the people I haven't met that are praying for Blake. Thank you for letting me share this moment with you.

Love,

Kimberly :)

♥ **November 24, 2004 at 10:28 PM CST**

Hello & Happy Thanksgiving!!!

Today I had a good day with Blake. He slept most of the day, which is very normal. He needs to continue to grow. He is now 3 lb 2 oz!!!! Today he had his first eye exam. The doctor didn't get a very good view, so Blake is scheduled to have an ultrasound of the eyes on Friday. The technology is amazing to me. I have never heard of doing an ultrasound of the eyes.

They will sedate him prior, so he will not become stressed. Please pray for a good report of his eyes.

Dr. Zeb wanted me to include that they are feeding Blake with breast milk. He is increasing his feedings slowly. He was concerned our friends and family thought the Doctors were starving Blake.

Please have a safe holiday! Give your family hugs and kisses!!!

Love,
Kimberly :)

♥ **November 25, 2004 02:38 PM CST**

Hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving, and took a few moments to cherish all that we each have to be thankful for. Kimberly and I are certainly thankful for all our family and friends' love and support as well as the wonderful doctors and nurses who are caring for our son Blake. He is such a fighter, and continues to amaze us with his will to overcome each hurdle.

Today Blake had the ultrasound of his eyes as a follow up to his first eye exam on Wednesday. Of the many possible conditions that they could have found due to Blake's infection and pre-maturity, they were relieved to not find anything like a detached retina or build-up of white blood cells. The ultrasound did show that Blake has cataracts though.

Dr. Zeb assured us that though this sounds concerning at first, that they found cataracts is much better news than other potential conditions. There

is a small chance that these cataracts could go away in time or if they remain can be remedied with surgery later. The doctors will monitor these cataracts over time and deal with them when appropriate. For now, there are more important things to focus on.

The main focus at this time is to address Blake's nutrition. More mom's milk has been ordered...and hopefully Blake will be able to digest these larger feedings and in turn gain weight and strength. This will all lead to getting him off the respirator sooner.

Today Blake weighed in at 3 lbs. 5 oz. That now takes him from the featherweight up to the light-middleweight division I'd say. Check out the latest photo to see his current size. Though Mommy doesn't want him to grow up too fast, she is happy with his growth in the past couple of weeks.

We'll continue the updates...now get back to those leftovers.

♥ November 29, 2004 at 09:02 AM CST

Good Monday Morning All,

As I'm sure everyone is dragging themselves back to work after the Turkey-fest, and hopefully four days off...how about some good news to kick start the week. The good news is that we all have just three weekends to complete our Christmas shopping...just kidding...the good news is that Blake is resting easy this morning, and 'Cool-hand' Luc is caring for him today.

This little boy loves sleeping on his tummy, as his Daddy, and is hugging a big pillow this morning. Good O2 sat. and low FIO2 requirements (low 30's)- each best he's posted after several other good days.

Lots of well wishes needed for Mommy today, as she goes back to the clinic today after 6 weeks off of work. With Blake in her heart and lots of stories to tell everyone...hopefully the day will go by fast. Please say a quick prayer for her today. Blake's doing his best to keep her from worrying too much. Have a good day Mommy!!!

Take Care Everyone,
Daddy J

♥December 01, 2004 at 12:06 PM CST

Hello Everyone,

Daddy here with another special moment to share with you all. Blake had a good day yesterday...he tolerated lying on his back much better and has continued to receive increased feedings of breast milk. The doctors are now able to slightly reduce the TPN nutrition drip (Gatorade for babies, as it is called, due to its clear yellow color). If Blake can continue to digest more and more breast milk, then the TPN can be proportionally reduced from his diet. Blake is now receiving 14 ml of breast milk every 3 hours with little to no residual.

And even better news was that he tolerated laying on his back much better than before, and when he desat-ed he was able to bring himself back up much quicker and easier than before.

Due to having a better day...our nurse Luc was able to make another surprise moment occur. This time the surprise was on Daddy. Yes after 6 weeks of bedside encouragement and love, and a momentous 'finger grip', I for the first time held Blake in my arms. Taken completely by surprise and worried that Blake was not up for the transfer...I was a bit scared to be honest. Before I knew it, though, Luc who had already been preparing for my arrival, laid my son in my arms. (OK get the tissues out)

To be able to look down at your son, seeing yourself and Mommy in his facial features, and feeling the warmth of his tiny body...every ounce of which started from the love of his parents is breath taking. I was afraid to move an inch at first, but as he showed us his strength and with Luc there to bag oxygen to his lungs...I was able to fully appreciate the gift that Luc made possible. Blake lay there with such tender innocence and purity...what a feeling! Yesterday was a big day for Daddy, I'd have to say it was a right of passage in many ways.

Luc, these two gifts that you have made happen are more valuable than any gift Kimberly and I could dream of. We will always remember these moments. Kimberly and I want you to know that we are forever grateful for your sincere care and know you will be blessed in return for all you do. Thank You.

Please take a look at the latest photos, and more updates to come. All our strength comes from moments like these...

One Proud Dad

♥December 04, 2004 at 10:23 PM CST

Hello Everyone - This is Aunt Becky. I know it has been several days since news was posted about Blake so I'll just add a little tidbit to tide you over until his parents can get to it. He is progressing steadily although as expected there are still bumpy times. Grandma Mary and Grandma Judy traveled to Austin on Friday for a visit. Grandma Mary said Blake had a rough time of it on Friday evening as his oxygen sats fluctuated somewhat more than usual. I don't know what the cause of that might be. She wasn't sure what time Kim and Chad finally made it home. However she did say they were home which means Blake was doing better and they felt comfortable enough to leave.

Today, report was that Blake was having a much better day and his sats were improved. Seems Blake has already learned to take each day in stride and muddle through whatever comes his way. WHAT A LITTLE WARRIOR!!

So I close and wish you all a restful weekend.

Love always-
Aunt Becky

♥December 05, 2004 at 01:57 PM CST

Hello, this is Blake's Aunt Michelle and I just spoke to Kimberly and she asked me to post her message because her computer crashed this morning. That's all she needs right now! They have had a busy week with

Kimberly going back to work. So she apologizes for the delay in sending updates. Kimberly and Chad were at home putting up their Christmas decorations to brighten things up. The 2 grandmas had a nice visit with them and enjoyed every minute they spent in the room with Blake. Happy Birthday to Grandma Kramr today. Blake is doing better today. Tanya, one of his guardian angels is with him today and she says he is tolerating his oxygen requirements better than Friday. He's doing great with his feedings of 20cc every 3 hrs. Way to GROW Blake! He's on a medication called Lasix to decrease the fluid in his lungs and it seems to be doing its job. He's finally off all of his antibiotics. Yea! Well that's all for now. Coming soon Kim will write and tell you his latest trick. New pictures are coming soon also. May God Bless everyone!

Love,

Aunt Michelle

♥ **December 07, 2004 at 01:28 PM CST**

Hello from Mommy,

So sorry I haven't sent a message, but it's been quite a roller coaster ride. Friday Chad & I stayed up all night with Blake, because he didn't have such a good night. His oxygen requirements were up and down all night. Thank God we got through that night. Sat & Sun were much better. Since Sunday the doctors have been decreasing the rate on the ventilator. They are hopefully he will be off the ventilator soon. Blake has done well with all the changes on the ventilator so far--way to go Baby!!!! I'm so surprised he has made such a come back again. He is definitely our miracle baby!!!

He is also enjoying the mommy's milk. Everyday the feedings have increased. Today the doctors are trying him on full feeds, 30cc every 3 hours. I just can't believe it. My new trick with Blake is for him to suck on my finger with a little sugar water. He loves it. (I think I enjoy it more than him). I like to do it when he is receiving the milk so he can associate feeding with sucking. It will be easier to transition to breast or bottle feeding-hopefully. Today Blake is going to have another Echocardiogram to check his ventricle defect and pulmonary hypertension. I will have to explain that later, because I have to go to work.

I love you all. Thank you so much for your prayers, they are working!! The cataracts are clearing a little and the doctors do not know why?? I know it's from the power of prayer.

Love,
Kimberly :)

♥December 10, 2004 at 09:37 AM CST

TGIF... Good Morning All,

Daddy here...making sure everyone got their Blake fix before the weekend. Last night Mommy held Blake for a good hour in her arms. She came home last night glowing. Our dogs Domino and Pocono got their first good scents of their future ball throwing Buddy as Mommy brought home one of Blake's blankets. The amazing Luc came back yesterday after much needed vacation time, and was refreshed with great spirit for Blake. Tanya is caring for Blake today after a few days, and due to his stats as Daddy left this morning, Blake was glad to see her too.

The cardiologists had their weekly Friday meeting this morning and discussed Blake. Without getting into all the details, they are going to be watching Blake closely over the next few weeks. Let's all focus our prayers and thoughts towards Blake's heart and breathing. They have started some medications to help his heart contract better and will be starting back the nitric oxide to relax and open his lungs. Pray for Blake's continued heart and lung growth as well as relief from the small openings in his heart. Thank you for your prayers.

On the growth side, Blake is so close to topping the 4 lbs. mark. Any day now he will be there. He is getting extra calories with his full feedings and is almost completely off of the TPN. All good from this front. We hope everyone enjoys the weekend...and during those crowded shopping moments, take a deep breath for Blake and remember the message of Christmas. Love and Hope.

Love you All,
Chad

♥December 12, 2004 at 07:50 PM CST

Hello Everyone,

Hold on to your seats--Blake is now 4lb 2.6 oz. I can't believe it either.

The doctors are proud of Blake's growth. We will be happy to hear the staff call him chubby one of these days. One of the surgeons that placed

his central line came by to see Blake. He couldn't believe how different Blake looked from 3 weeks ago. He asked me, "Where did your baby go, because he doesn't look like the same baby?"

Yesterday we met briefly with the cardiologist and he stated the echo looked better. Meaning: the heart's contractility increased. They decided to start the nitric oxide on Saturday after the echo. We are just crossing our fingers that the echo shows good news for tomorrow (Monday). We just left Blake, because of change of shift. He looked very relaxed. He loves to kick his little feet out of the snuggly. I could not resist kissing his little feet. I am in love with another boy, my son Blake.

Today at church Pastor Fetter was so kind to use Blake's story in his sermon. It was very emotional. I was very moved by his words of love and being patient with God. We have to remember that not everyone is happy during this "Most Wonderful Time of the Year." If you are happy DO NOT hide it from your friends and family, express it.

Remember to pray for those who are less fortunate or struggling with life. Just a side note about my own thoughts, when I start to feel sorry for myself I think of patients at the clinic that are less fortunate. I also walk around the hospital and look around at the children in wheelchairs or that are suffering a terrible illness, with smiles on their faces.

I realize that I need to be strong and have faith God is ALWAYS with us. I also think of all the blessings I have in my life-a wonderful husband, child that is fighting for his life, family and friends that are supportive and caring, the air we breathe, healthy body God has given me and the ability to wake up everyday to face what God will hand me. That is just a few. Sorry for the run-on sentences, I type the way I talk, if you didn't notice...

Some other good news I would like to share, Chad's office has moved to a prime spot in Austin, right by town lake. He starts in the new building Monday. It is very modern and a great new look for the firm. I am actually sitting in his new office space. I need to run, talk to you soon. Love you all so much. Please be careful shopping with all the last minute shoppers.

Love,
Kimberly :)

