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Chapter Seven
Six Months Old,
Hernia Surgery & Extubation Success

♥ April 17, 2005 at 01:23 PM CDT

Blake is now 6 months old!!!!

Yesterday was Blake's 6 month Birthday! I made a sign and daddy bought a Elmo birthday balloon. Pictures to come...

It has been a nice weekend. I wanted to thank Denise, Aunt Mary Ann, Jaime, Nate and Aunt Michelle for visiting last weekend. I also want to thank Aunt Evelyn, Uncle Frank and Lee Ann for visiting during the week. It was good to see Lillian for a surprise visit yesterday. Today Grandpa Johnson is holding Blake for the 1st time. Daddy dressed him up for Grandpa in his pooh outfit. Sooo cute!

Blake also had a surprise birthday call from 2 of his nurses from Austin--Tanya and Gretchen. Thank you for remembering, we miss you.

I can't say it enough for everyone's love and support. We have the most AWESOME friends and family. We should know tomorrow if the hernia surgery will be this week. We will let you know. Thank you for the continued prayers.

Love,
Kimberly :)

♥ April 19, 2005 at 12:38 PM CDT

The plan is in place...

After a thorough examination of the options and the future steps for Blake, everyone agreed that this week was a good time for the hernia repair surgery. We do not have a time yet, but Blake is scheduled for the O.R. tomorrow, Wednesday.

Tonight the nurses will start an I.V. line to give platelets and will start holding his feeds before the surgery. The I.V. will also be used for clear fluids or TPN once the surgery is over. We hope that Blake will be back on his milk diet soon after the surgery...maybe within 24 hours. Kimberly and I will be meeting with the surgeon today to review the procedure. Please keep Blake in you thoughts and prayers tomorrow.

Mommy is holding Blake as I type, and he is half-way through today's pressure support trial. Blake has been doing very well on these. If not for surgery tomorrow, Blake would be moving up to the 10-hour trials. After the surgery, the doctors will start back at 2-hours trials...but will move ahead more aggressively to get him back to 8-10 hour trials within a week or two. It will be good to have the hernias repaired and hopefully the source for Blake's extra residuals from his feedings. We pray that the hernias are the main cause for Blake's digestion slowing. If they are not the only cause, then expect to hear about some additional testing to find the cause.

A word of good news, that I'm not sure if Kimberly has reported...the last abdominal ultrasound showed slight flow through the portal vein leading to Blake's liver, which had been completely blocked. As you remember, one of the two main veins leading to the liver had been occluded. To see

some flow is great news. Hopefully the first of several leaps for Blake in the coming month.

We are hopeful for a beautiful, sunny day tomorrow...and more importantly a successful surgery and recovery. Thank you so much for being patient with our updates, and keeping Blake in you thoughts and prayers. They are all working!!!

Best wishes for you and your families.

Love,

Chad Kimberly & Blake :)

PS photos to come...as soon as Daddy gets back to Austin, maybe Thursday if all goes well.

♥ April 20, 2005 at 09:04 AM CDT

Good Morning to All, Kimberly asked me to post an update for all the Blake watchers. His surgery is scheduled for 12:30 pm. It should last approx. 1 1/2 hrs. They are trying to get a new IV line in at the moment in preparation for surgery as well as giving him some fluids before hand. Blake is having a good morning and we pray that it carries over to his procedure this afternoon. Thank you all for your kind thoughts, words and prayers.

More news later after surgery.

Uncle Michael

♥ **April 20, 2005 at 11:01 AM CDT**

Just a quick note to update you all--Blake's surgery has been moved up to 11:30. Grandma Mary sent me the message of the time change. Let's pray everything works out as planned and Blake has a quick and 'uneventful' recovery.

I'll post more as I get word from Houston-
Aunt Becky

♥ **April 20, 2005 at 04:38 PM CDT**

Hello from Mommy,

Just a quick note to let everyone know Blake is finally out of surgery!!!! 3 1/2 hours. It went well, just a little longer than the surgeon expected. We are so glad it is over. Blake looks better than he has ever looked. We do expect by tomorrow he will have lots of swelling that will last for several months. Today we will enjoy seeing him small again. Thank you again for all your prayers. We appreciate and love each and everyone of you.

Love,
Kimberly, Chad and Blake :)

♥ April 21, 2005 at 09:43 AM CDT

Bye-Bye Hernias, (knock on wood...)

Daddy here from Austin, and relieved to report everything is going well for Blake after his surgery yesterday. As Mommy reported, Blake looked great after surgery, and had a restful night with his primary nurse Sandra. We will be watching and hoping that the swelling expected will be moderate and that Blake is not too uncomfortable as he comes out of the 'surgery sleep' today. He will be getting some morphine as needed for the pain. This little trooper is tough, I tell you.

Last night he looked as though he was grinning from ear to ear, having outlasting another round. Unfortunately, these last rounds took a direct hit to some sensitive areas...Daddy feels your pain, little Buddy.

Blake is so loved!!! Kimberly and I really appreciate all the support and caring shared by family and friends. Grandparents Kramr and Johnson were with us yesterday. Know that we do not take your love, time, and support for granted. Blake can't wait to spend sunny afternoons out on the ranches with the grandparents. Thanks for all you do for us...

We also received words of encouragement and support from 'Aunt' Janice, Tonya, and Gretchen over the past days...all nurses from Austin. Thank God for such caring nurses... We are very thankful to have nurse Sandra primary Blake at Texas Children in Houston. Sandra cares for Blake as if he were her own. She will be with Blake tonight again, and I'm sure Kimberly will rest easier knowing Blake is in her caring hands.

And thank you all who continue to visit us and send caring messages for Blake (Uncle Ed & Bernice, Melissa, Mike/Michelle/Brooks/Kristen, Michael/Becky/Jessica/Gregory, Chung, Pastor Fetter & Mary, Bob & Sara Patterson, and Sasha/Craig/Catch/Chase Thompson in particular to name only a few. As well as all you not mentioned who add prayers and support as well as follow Blake's progress.

I'm about to be kicked off the site for taking so long to put this last message together... so I'll bring this one to a close and add more this afternoon. With pictures!!!

Check back for more later...

Good Day All.

Daddy J.

♥ **April 21, 2005 at 02:58 PM CDT**

Just a quick note... New photos are loaded from this past week.

Blake's little Pooh outfit was twice as cute in person. News flash- Blake has graduated out the 0-3 and premie sizes, Mommy and Daddy went shopping for a couple of 3-6 month outfits this past weekend. Blake weighed in at 9 lbs. 2 oz. over the weekend, and probably dipped down below 9 lbs. due to the surgery...but expect him back there shortly. Keep it up Blake...

Blake is starting back on a little milk today, with some TPN drip to keep up his nutrition. If he is able to digest well, the doctors will get him back to full feeds within a few days hopefully. Otherwise, very little sedation needed today, and only slight inflammation. Doctors expect more to come as Blake heals and starts moving around more today. A second blood transfusion was needed since the surgery, all expected by the doctors.

Thanks for following the progress. Another update coming tomorrow.
Daddy

♥ **April 25, 2005 at 03:09 PM CDT**

Good Monday Everyone...

Here's a quick note as to Blake's recovery and current watch items. Blake held off the doctor's plans for a Barium Enema scheduled for today. This is a study to look for any constrictions in his bowels which may be slowing his digestion. We are still hopeful that the hernia repairs cured last weeks slower digestion, but the doctor's want to make sure there are no other concerns in there. Blake successfully delayed the enema by proving things were moving...finally a bowel movement appeared this morning, and another this afternoon. Good Boy!

Daddy felt much better leaving Houston this morning w/ the 5 am report from the nurse. Feeds are continuing to go well, and we hope to see them increase back to full feeds within the next couple of days, and therefore remove the need for I.V. access.

Blake is going through the IVs too quickly and getting new ones as old ones stop working is getting more and more difficult. His poor little veins are bruised in each arm and leg. We are praying that Blake can tolerate these lines for a few more days. Then back to full feeds please...

Blake enjoyed playing in his swing Sunday. Kimberly and I called to check on him early in the am, and the nurse said she had placed him in his swing. What?!? Blake had not liked his previous attempt in the swing weeks ago...but when we showed up shortly after calling...Blake was 'just a swing-ing', and sat-ing 95.(very good) Blake spent the next three hours playing in the swing, and as long as Mommy and Daddy kept the pacifier in place, Blake was happy. For a while, he even went to sleep. Then as we moved the pacifier away, he would realize his friend was gone and wake up. Duh! Daddy has a couple of soar arms today, but Blake's laughing...

Blake's pressure trials continued to go well. Yesterday, Blake finished his 6 hour trial with great numbers. He held solid even through getting a new IV. We had a few concerning moments as IVs were getting started, but otherwise our focus was on Blake's diapers. Mommies and Daddy's out there...you know our worry. Never have I cheered for such a discrete arrival. Whew... I hope everything is getting back to normal in that department. Sorry Blake, for announcing to everyone the current situation...but everyone has been waiting for the news...as intently as the naming of the new pope almost. Sorry, bad joke...

We'll keep you all posted as the week develops. Hope you all had a good weekend, and a good Monday.

Take Care...

Daddy

♥ April 27, 2005 at 08:04 AM CDT

Surprise Wednesday Note,

Yesterday Blake had a central PIC line placed, this required Blake to be sedated and transferred down to the surgical area for the procedure. The line is placed in his right hand, and extends within the vessel up to the heart. Having this PIC line gives Blake a more stable IV access point, and hopefully no more IV sticks for awhile. I'd lost count, but I think Blake went through 4 IVs in a week.

This morning Blake will have the Barium Enema Contrast Study. The doctors are looking for a possible stricture, or point of blockage or narrowing along his intestines. Blake has not been able to digest at the rate they would expect, or stool for a few days. Hopefully this is not due to a stricture...if so, another surgery may be needed.

Please send thoughts and prayers to Blake for this morning's events. This little trooper has endured more than most of us have had to in our entire lifetime. Keep up the fight, Son...

Love and Thanks to you All,
Have a good Wednesday!

Daddy

♥ April 27, 2005 at 04:46 PM CDT

Good Report Card...

Review of the Barium Enema Contrast Study showed no stricture in Blake's intestines. Yea!! Mommy said Blake just had a big 'present' for her thanks to the enema and that he was doing fine. I'll give a more detailed message tomorrow as to the next steps. I thought everyone would like to hear the good news. More to come...

♥ April 28, 2005 at 04:17 PM CDT

Good Report Card, cont.

Today Blake is back on track with his pressure support trials after the great news yesterday. Today Blake is working on a 12-hr. trial (9 am - 9 pm). Tomorrow Blake will have an Upper G.I. Study, similar to the last study, but looking at his stomach and upper intestines. This is just a precaution...and once this out rules any problems with his digestive system, the docs will not have to worry that anything is wrong when Blake doesn't feel like eating as much as they would like to give him. Having an end to these studies will be a big relief.

Next step...hopefully working our way back to nasal canula, off of the ventilator. We're cheering for you, Blake! More to come...

Daddy

♥ April 30, 2005 at 01:38 PM CDT

Good News...

NO STRICTURES OR OBSTRUCTIONS!!
HALLELUIA! Praise the Lord!! Blake is so blessed to jump this hurdle. The doctors at this point believe he just has slow motility. Blake just needs a little extra time digesting his food. He is a slow eater like mommy. Blake has been doing great on his 12 hour pressure support trials. Blake is enjoying swinging in his swing today. Blake is showing daddy his new trick--playing with his first set of keys. Pictures to come...

Blake would like to wish his buddies ADAM & CONNOR a HAPPY 1ST BIRTHDAY!!!! Blake would also like to wish Aunt Lee Ann (Payne) a Happy Birthday!!!

We hope for a quiet weekend--NO procedures. Enjoy the weekend Blake's Buddies.

Love,
Kimberly & Blake :)

♥ May 02, 2005 at 08:39 AM CDT

Fresh New Week to Everyone...
Blake is starting a new week with optimism and one 'big' goal ahead. Now that the doctor's have ruled out any strictures, they can proceed with

confidence that he is just digesting a little slower at particular times. We'll probably see them try bolus feeds; which are the same feeds given over one hour instead of three, and then two hour of digestion time. Currently Blake is being fed continuously. 17.5cc/hour. Anyhow...Blake kept up well with his feedings over the weekend though at times he slowed down, only to make up for it over the next hours. Whew!! We are so glad there was no stricture!! Thank you for all the prayers!!

This week Blake will be allowed to continue with increased durations of pressure support trials. 16 hours yesterday... We'll see what the plan for the week is today. Though we have a new nurse practitioner, Blake will have the same neonatologist for the next month. We are very glad to have Dr. Guillory back for another round. She is known for her thoroughness and open dialogue with her patient's families. Also Dr. Fernandez is back working in the unit and will be stopping by for updates and giving encouragement. We have lots of trust in this team, and know they can get Blake in shape to come home. We just have to keep a patience pledge that Blake is going to make it!!!

We wish for a safe trip for Kim's best bud Lee Ann Hoffmann, who is making the trip with her son Adam and sister-in-law today. Kimberly is so very excited start the week off with Lee Ann's visit. I bet Adam will try to send in a note to Blake, with a few more lessons from his 'Adventures in Eating' Series. Thank you Lee Ann, for making the trip. Prayer's for a safe trip...

We hope everyone has a great week, and look forward to sharing good news and strides for Blake. Thanks for sticking with us through all this. We love you all...

Daddy

PS- Blake wanted to wish Aunt Lee Ann (Payne) Happy 29th Birthday. He said he looks forward to next year's Big Bash after hearing the wonderful meal Bryan planned and fixed for the party. Enjoy 29...the big 30 is hovering over the horizon.

♥ **May 02, 2005 at 01:10 PM CDT**

Call in from Kimberly...

24 hours pressure support trial today. They want to see what Blake can do. Also, increasing feeds so that the TPN can be stopped in the next day or two. Very good report. Do your best Blake!!!!

♥ **May 03, 2005 at 09:52 AM CDT**

Doing great...

Blake made it through the 24-hr. trial, and they decided to continue the trial. Going on 26 hours as of this report. Keep it up!

Just a reminder...the pressure support trial still provides ventilator support for Blake, but Blake is starting all his own breaths. The ventilator is set to CPAP settings, meaning it is keeping a constant pressure of air for Blake. As president Bush would say..."Blake is working hard..." More updates as they come.

The doctors increased feedings to 21.5 CCs/Hr. No more TPN or lipids. Hopefully the central PIC line will be able to be removed soon too. All good news. Stay tuned!

Daddy

♥ **May 06, 2005 at 11:11 AM CDT**

TGIF,

Good Morning Ya'll...the weeks are just flying by. Continued good reports for Blake this week. Yesterday, he passed the 10 lbs. bar even with several blowouts through the day. We are happy to report both. Blake has started some new physical therapy; they are working on getting him to sit up and support himself. So far the boppy-pillow helps to stabilize him, and the therapists holds his hands. Kimberly has been enjoying this very much. Blake is continuing the CPAP trial started last Monday, and the doctors will start lowering other settings soon to keep weaning of the ventilator's support. All good news...

Monday Blake will have another hearing test as a follow up to the last one. Blake's ears were cleaned of wax this week, so they want to run the test again. We'll pass on the results.

Kimberly called this morning as she was catching the train to the Houston zoo. Our niece Kristen's class is having a field trip to the zoo today, and Kimberly is going to join them for a few hours. Kimberly was glad to be able to venture out of the hospital for a few hours, especially knowing that Blake has been doing so well this week.

With Mother's Day this weekend, I wanted to pass along my love for my wife Kimberly and her amazing devotion to our dear Blake. Honey, you are an inspiration!! I've known from the beginning that you would be a wonderful Mom, and I'm so thankful that God has led us through these many tough days. Your spirit is also leading Blake through these days. Thank you for being such a wonderful wife.

Also, thanks to our Mom's...Judy and Mary. As parents ourselves now, Kimberly and I can fully appreciate all the restless nights and countless concerns parents endure. Thank for all the love and support. We love you both...

Take time to share thoughts with your families, and enjoy the weekend. Blessings to you all.

Daddy

♥ **May 07, 2005 at 05:06 PM CDT**

Hello everyone,

Chad & I had a long night with Blake on Friday. He decided to spike a temp 101.0 at 6 pm. We tried Tylenol first, but that didn't help. Next a cool bath, which he enjoyed temp decreased to 99.1. Blake's CBC came back positive for a possible infection. Poor little Blake had to go through another sepsis workup, which he knows well. It consist of a culture, culture and trachea culture. Antibiotics were started last night. This morning the culture from his PICC line was positive. The specific

type of infection should be known tomorrow after it has more time to grow. The PICC line was just taken out, hopefully to get rid of the problem. Thanks to Amy one of the nurse practitioners, she was able to get a new IV started. Thank you AMY!!

Blake is resting comfortably. Our son is such a trooper, as long as he has his pacifier during the procedures he is happy. Blake was given the best medicine of all today--daddy's love. Chad held Blake for 3hours.

Update on hearing test: I was told that he has fluid in his ears which is causing minor hearing loss. Hopefully it will just take time (like everything else) to clear.

Blake continues to do well on pressure support!!! We hope this infection will not slow him down. Please pray for Blake to get through the infection and continue to progress with the ventilator.

Happy Mother's day for all the mom's and mom's to be!!

Love,
Kimberly :)

♥ **May 09, 2005 at 01:02 PM CDT**

Howdy from Aggie-Land! This is Aunt Becky with an update on the WalkAmerica event from here in College Station this past weekend. "Blake's Buddies" participated in the annual March of Dimes event by gathering a group and walking 3.2 miles on Saturday morning. The

"Buddies" included: Grandma & Grandpa Kramr, Aunt Michelle, Brooks & Kristen, Uncle Michael, Aunt Becky, Jessica & Gregory, MeeMee Derrisaw, Grandma Hechler, & Kim Taylor, Noah & Zoe (Jessica & Gregory's friends).

The group picture is posted in the photo gallery. All in all we had a great walk and raised nearly \$1500 for March of Dimes research. We want to thank everyone who gave so generously to this cause. We'd also like to ask that you continue to keep Blake and all preemies in your prayers!

Have a GREAT week-

Becky

♥ **May 10, 2005 at 01:39 PM CDT**

Good Afternoon Everyone,

Blake is doing good today...we are sending out a special prayer request out for another little boy and family we've gotten to know in our time at Texas Children's. This special little boy's name is Cole and he needs our prayers as we focus on healing and strength for the families facing similar obstacles as our dear Blake. Please add Cole to your daily devotions and prayers. Little Cole, may God blanket you with healing and peace in the coming days. Thank you all for your focus on Blake's friend.

As I started, Blake is doing fine today. The infection continues to be isolated to the culture taken from the PIC line. Last night Blake had a

Lumbar Puncture to make sure there was no infection in the spinal fluid. This was just a precaution due to the bacteria found from the PIC line. The other cultures are still negative to date.

The doctor's are starting to discuss another attempt at extubating Blake. We'll keep you posted as to the specifics. To cover ourselves...let's all start praying today, as we could see something as early as tomorrow. We'll keep you posted. The doctor's reduced the pressure setting to 10 today as Blake continues the pressure support trial. They raised the O2 setting to 55%. At these settings the doctor's feel that Blake can go to nasal cannula.

The main concern that the doctor's have is that Blake's heart VSDs may contribute to over circulation of his lungs without the ventilator's support. But Blake is bigger and stronger now, and they think he is ready to try again. We'll keep you all posted as things move forward. We're all cheering for you son!!!!

Again, please include prayers for the other children and families facing health issues... Thank you All...

Daddy

♥ **May 11, 2005 at 09:49 AM CDT**

Big Morning...

Blake is getting a new IV this morning, then the doctor's are going to take the E.T. tube OUT... They all think Blake is ready to try again. I just talked to Kim, and they will be moving forward in a few minutes. Let's all send our thoughts to Blake this morning. I believe they will transition to nasal

cannula, at about .5 liters of oxygen at his nose, just like last time. We are all cheering for you, Blake.

Updates to come...

Daddy

♥ **May 11, 2005 at 04:18 PM CDT**

Afternoon Update,

Blake continues to do well without the ventilator this afternoon. He is on 1 liter of O2 with the nasal cannula. Kimberly with Grandma and Grandpa Kramr are watching him closely and keeping him comfortable. Keeping those nasal prongs in when he gets shifty can be a bit stressful for those first hours. Keep up the watch team... Thanks for all your prayers today.

Today has been a difficult day. We've been trying to balance Blake's extubation with the devastating news regarding Blake's buddy Cole. Cole passed away this morning. Our deepest sympathies and prayers go out the Cole's family. They have been through an emotional roller coaster just as we have. Please continue the special prayers for Cole and his family. These are the toughest times to try and understand why such things have to happen...but we forge on. Cole, you are in our hearts.

Another prayer request has come about in this circle of friends and family. My friend and co-worker Robert had heart surgery this week. I went to visit him over lunch and he is doing good. Ricardo and I joked that we were bringing him some work to do...in disguising some architectural magazines for reading. Robert is expecting to go home in a week or so.

Please add Robert to your thoughts and prayers. His family has included Blake in their prayers and we gladly return them for Robert. We are looking forward to smooth recovery and some much deserved rest in the coming weeks.

Like all days...there are victories and defeats I guess. We pray for help understanding our place in each of these moments, and for the strength to endure the hard times in order to see the miracles continuing around us.

Have a good night,

Chad

♥ **May 12, 2005 at 08:34 AM CDT**

Good Thursday Morning,

Hope everyone is doing well, let's all face the day together with hope and smiles. Blake did well through his first day off the ventilator. Blood gas test and chest x-ray looked good this morning. We are hoping Blake will settle in and get a good amount of rest today. With the big change yesterday, he didn't seem to get a good several hours of rest at one time. And therefore neither did Mommy. Kimberly slept a few hours at the Ronald McDonald House there in the hospital, and is back to be by his side this morning. The plan is to get him in her lap so that he can rest and hopefully fall asleep. Prayers for rest and enduring lungs would be much appreciated. Kimberly is enjoying seeing Blake's cute cheeks again...both sets, that is! With the E.T. tube and the tape required to hold it in place gone, now you can see his cheeks.

Thanks for all the messages...we are approaching 600 postings on the message board. That is just incredible! We are blessed and humbled by everyone's attention.

Here's to a good day...

Chad

♥ **May 13, 2005 at 05:26 PM CDT**

Friday Update,

Thought I'd step out to send a quick update...

Blake is still off the ventilator, but on CPAP now instead of nasal cannula. Blake was not doing as well without the pressure support, but is doing fine with CPAP. We are going through times when Blake rests very well to times when he is restless. The restless times are a bit challenging as the CPAP prongs come off his nose very easily. We have been staying by his side since Thursday morning. We will be taking it day by day for a little while, hopeful of steady progress. Thanks for all the prayers for patience and health.

We will try to keep a few postings coming over the weekend with updates. Enjoy the weekend.

Thanks be to God...

Chad

♥ May 14, 2005 at 10:33 PM CDT

Good evening Blake-ster's:

We hope you all had a good week and are enjoying the beautiful, sunny days!! We are encouraged by Blake's continued success with breathing on his own. We are hopeful that he will remain strong and keep up the fight!!

Several weeks ago, Chad eluded to some coming news from "Blake's Buddies" and it has finally arrived. You are all invited to "SAVE THE DATE" for October 1, 2005. Blake's Buddies are in the process of planning a fundraising event for Blake. It will consist of something for everyone: a raffle, golf tournament, dinner, silent auction and entertainment. The events will be held in Austin.

We would like to know early if you plan to play in the golf tournament or could be counted on to get together a four man team. (An estimate is needed to reserve a course.) Please send us an email if you'd like to take part.

Look for more details to come. Since many of you know other people who are keeping up with Blake but may not see the Carepages, please pass the information on to them as well.

Have a good week and keep those prayers going for Blake.
Till next time-

Aunt Becky & Uncle Michael