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**Chapter 13**  
**One Year Old, Birthday Celebrations &**  
**Heart Surgery**

♥ October 14, 2005 at 12:21 PM CDT

**B**lake's Birthday Weekend, Baby!!!! I'm sure that everyone is overdue for a Blake fix, and so here's a much belated and packed-filled update for you all. Blake has had a great week at home. We've never seen him play so hard through the day and sleep so well through the night. I think he likes being home. We had three doctor's visits, including a trip to the pediatrician. Blake handles the car trips well, and Mommy and Daddy are getting into the routine of packing him and all his stuff for the trips. We're proud to say we were not late for any of the visits. (Good Luck keeping that up, right?)

Blake and Kim have had a few visitors, including a short stop by Sheri Salas with the newest addition to the family, Elena Marie. Congratulations to the Salas' for their second daughter, she is very cute. Kimberly's happy to be able to spend time with her best bud Lee Ann...and Blake so glad to finally meet Adam. These two will be getting each other in trouble soon enough. We would like to thank all the neighbors and friends who stopped by with food/drinks/desserts for us this week. They were all greatly appreciated and saved us lots of time which we were able to instead focus on Blake.

We are so looking forward to Blake's second 1st Birthday! The awesome nurses at TCH put on the first one just before we left Houston and now we're ready to celebrate his real birthday this weekend. Blake's birthday is Sunday, and we are looking forward to being with him all day. Part of his birthday will include planting a Red Maple tree in the backyard for him. This tree will symbolize Blake's many triumphs and hope for the future ones. Thanks to G/G Kramr for this special birthday gift. G/G Johnson will be visiting Saturday and Blake may get to meet his doggies for the first time, weather permitting. Our Border Collies Domino and Pocono may get to come along and stay in to backyard for the visit. Kim is really looking forward to seeing her girls too!

Once we celebrate Blake's birthday, we'll start plans for our return to Houston. We will check Blake back into TCH Tuesday morning to prepare for his heart surgery Wednesday. Blake is the first

case of the day Wednesday. We'll send an update as soon as we can.

Thank you for including Blake in your prayers and thoughts this week and Wednesday morning in particular. Please send many prayers for Blake and for the surgeons, cardiologists, and nurses for a successful procedure. Thank you all! We hope everyone has a wonderful weekend; this is certainly one of the most beautiful times of the year. Enjoy it! Thanks everyone, for your patience and supportive messages.

Blake's Daddy,  
*Chad*

P.S.- Blake's Buddies are back at it...check your calendars for Nov. 19th, we'll be celebrating Blake's first month after a hopefully successful heart surgery with the post-poned Golf/Dinner Benefit.

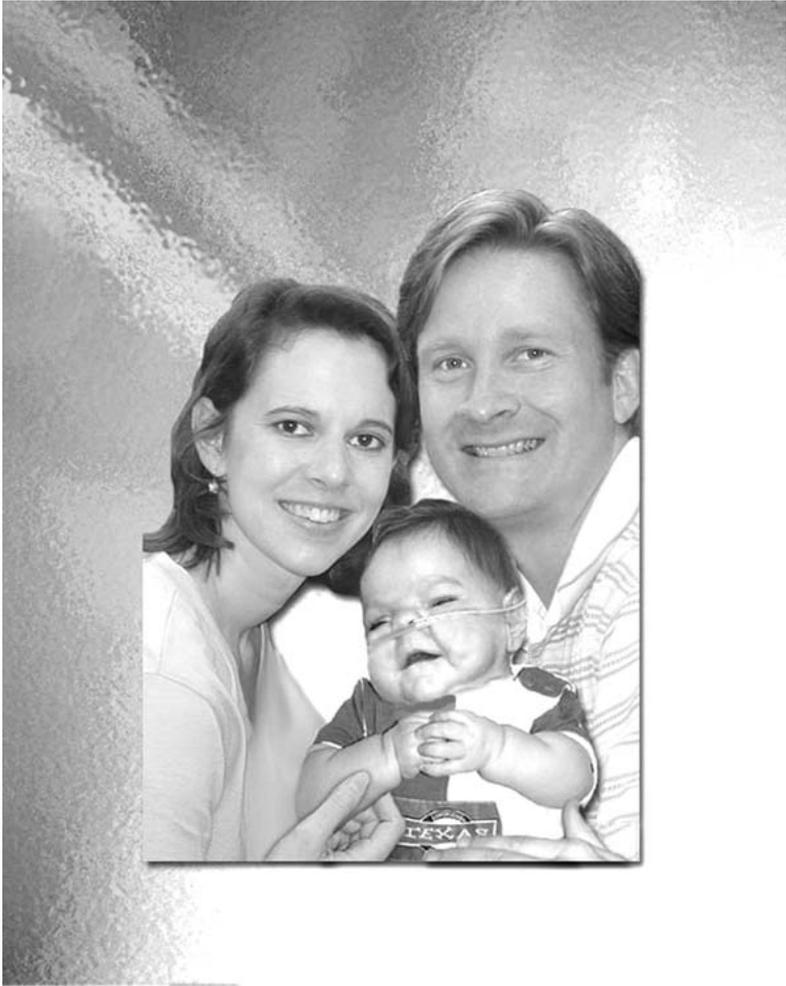
♥ **October 18, 2005 at 10:33 AM CDT**

**T**his is a note from Grandma Johnson. I want to remind everyone of Blake's surgery Wednesday, 10/19. Please send extra special prayers for Blake for this event. Also, pray for the parents and family members to feel God's blessings during the time spent in the waiting room.

Pass this request on to everyone knowing of precious Blake like your own church groups and friends. We thank you all for supporting this family. We are in deep gratitude for your love and caring. I am posting a portrait of Chad, Kim and Blake. I will be focusing on this family image during the surgery to remind me of how far we have come. I Love you all so very much.

*Grandma Johnson*

Rainbows For Blake



♥ **October 19, 2005 at 11:53 AM CDT**

**G**ood Morning Everyone. Quick update here from Aunt Becky at TCH. Blake went into surgery this morning at 8:00am. The surgical nurse has been by every hour to give updates on Blake's progress. We just received notice that he is safely on the heart bypass machine and is doing well. The doctors are about to take their first look inside his heart to see about closing the VSD's. It's a beautiful sunny day here in Houston and everyone's spirits are up. Please continue to pray for Blake, his family, the doctors, nurses and staff as they work toward making Blake healthy.

We'll keep you updated as more news is available.

*Aunt Becky*

♥ **October 19, 2005 at 04:36 PM CDT**

**A**unt Becky Here. I wanted to post an update before you all left work for the day. Blake just completed surgery and is being moved to recovery. Kim and Chad will be able to see him in about an hour. The doctors were able to place 2 devices in the ventricular wall to close many of the holes and they were able to remove the pulmonary band and repair the artery. The plan now is to let him sleep tonight and try to take him off of the ventilator tomorrow. Let's all focus our prayers for Blake's quick removal from the ventilator and for his continued progress toward better health. It is also very appropriate to offer prayers of thanksgiving for a successful surgery and for the many talented people who took care of Blake today.

More to come in the next few days-

*Aunt Becky*

♥ October 20, 2005 at 08:00 PM CDT

**M**ommy here. I want to start by saying **THANK YOU** all for your heart warming thoughts and prayers for Blake yesterday. He went through the surgery very smoothly. As the surgery ended he began to have an increased heart rate. His heart rate remained in the 180's until the middle of the night and decreased to 140's. This morning his pressure was low and heart rate remained in the 140's. The surgeon was a little concerned, but not surprised.

His heart went through much stress yesterday and is now re-learning how to pump. We are focused on raising the pressure, lowering the heart rate and keeping Blake very sedated. The doctors do not want Blake breathing over the ventilator at this time, because it would just stress the heart. We pray that he continues to make baby steps in the right direction, so we can begin to think of waking him up so he can breathe on his own & **GET RID OF THE VENTILATOR.**

Please continue to pray for Blake. We pray for the doctors and nurses so God will guide them in their decision making and skills. It's not over yet. The first 48 hours are very critical. I want to thank Dr. Heinle (cardiac surgeon) and Dr. Grifka and Dr. Studder (cardiac cath) and Dr. Campos (anesthesiologist) for their excellent skills in the operating room. Dr. Campos actually carried Blake to the operating room himself, very heart-warming. Thank you all. We love you and appreciate your prayers.

Love,

*Mommy Kim :)*

♥ October 23, 2005 at 02:44 PM CDT

**Q**uick Blake Update... We have been watching Blake very close since the surgery...and slowly but surely Blake is coming through all the

concerns. We got a good report regarding concerns that Blake may have an infection. There is no growth from the culture as of yet, so the doctors have taken away the antibiotics. No infection! Also Blake's heart is slowly relaxing and functioning with less work. Heart rate is down to 120, and the pressure in the right ventricle is down to around 10. Each of these numbers was elevated coming out of surgery. All better signs that the heart is getting better.

The doctors plan on trying to extubate Blake Monday or Tuesday depending on Blake of course. He calls the shots you know. All in all, small but good steps forward for Blake. Keep up all the prayers and support! Thanks to everyone who has taken time to pray and send well wishes for Blake. We are very blessed to be surrounded with such love and optimism. It all helps and will continue to lead Blake through these hard times. May you all be blessed in return... More to come soon.

**Blake, Kimberly, and I love you all!**

Enjoy the day.

*Chad*

♥ October 25, 2005 at 05:39 PM CDT

**H**ello everyone. Blake is having a good day, not such a great evening yesterday. He was having an arrhythmia (abnormal rhythm). It corrected itself overnight! His echo from yesterday looked better than the first one after surgery. The right ventricle isn't working as hard to pump the blood, but is still learning to RELAX. He is being treated for an infection in his trachea, but it is not in his blood stream. It is an infection he has had before (Serratia) and he is probably colonized with it. He will be treated with antibiotics for 10days. Blake's color remains to be pink, no more gray/blue hands.

## Rainbows For Blake

The doctors are weaning him from the sedatives and actually stopped one today. He is starting to wake up a little more and he is not to happy with the ventilator tube. We hope to continue to wean him off the sedatives so he will begin to breathe over the ventilator. It would be nice to get rid of the tube this week??

Thank you for all the thoughts and prayers. I want to thank the NICU staff for coming up to check on Blake. He misses all of you too.

I love you all. Enjoy the beautiful weather!! Go ASTROS!!

Love,

*Kimberly :)*

♥ October 28, 2005 at 10:58 AM CDT

**G**ood Friday to everyone. With Halloween coming this weekend, we are certainly hoping for less 'tricks' and more 'treats'.

Blake progress since surgery has been very slow, and we have another infection to deal with. Blake's cultures have shown that he is infected with gram negative rods and this may cause the doctors to need to remove all the central lines Blake has had since surgery. These lines are used for giving him meds including the antibiotics he has been on. Blake has also been needing red cells and platelets several times since the surgery through these lines.

We have been down this road long before and hope that this infection can be taken care of quickly. If the doctor's have to remove the central lines, because the infection source could be from within a line, then new ones will be needed right away in order to keep giving meds and products. Blake needs some prayers to help conquer this infection. He dodged infection bullets before...let's do it again. Please focus your thoughts and prayers to helping Blake overcome this latest infection.

The doctors have Blake on Ativan & Methadone only for pain and sedation. They have done this in order to wean him from the narcotic variety and slowly allow him to be awake more of the day. In

order for Blake to be able to breath without the ventilator, he will need to be less dependant on these sedations and more alert. Once we get over this infection, Blake will hopefully be ready to get rid of that breathing tube. Prayers needed here, too.

Though we seem to have taken several steps back, Blake's heart has been functioning well. That is a positive to remain focused on...Blake's heart is getting better. His sats. are nearly 100% most of the time, and his lungs are handling the extra flow. His heart rate and pressure are getting better. Blake continues to get rid of fluids that are throughout his body. His belly is somewhat swollen and his lungs are a little cloudy. Keep on using those kidneys Blake!

I hope this updates finds everyone looking forward to an amazing Fall weekend...and a Happy Halloween. Please keep an eye out for those kid-o's this weekend, they are more interested in getting more treats than watching for cars. Please be careful! Best of weekends to you all!

Love,  
*Chad*

♥ November 02, 2005 at 05:49 PM CST

**H**ello to everyone. It has been a busy day for Blake today. He was EXTUBATED today about 1pm!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! He let out a cry when the tube came out, which was a good thing to hear. It was a loud cry for him, because Blake doesn't cry very loud. The blood gas one hour after the tube came out was GREAT!! So far he is doing well. We have to keep praying that he can keep breathing on his own. We also have to pray that he continues to get rid of the fluid in his lungs and belly. Blake's belly remains distended from fluid.

After two weeks of being in the bed, the doctor let me HOLD Blake. Thank you, Dr. Garcia! It was such a great feeling to finally get to hold Blake again. Hopefully, we will be going to the regular floor

Rainbows For Blake

soon. This would be one giant step closer to home. Thank you for all your interest in our little miracle baby, BLAKE. I love each and every one of you.

Love,  
*Kimberly :)*

♥ November 04, 2005 at 03:25 PM CST

**G**ood Friday to everyone. Blake has waken up from all the sedatives!! I feel like my little boy is back!! He is doing well off the ventilator. He is still on 2 1/2 liters of oxygen, but saturations are in the high 90's. The doctors are still slowly weaning him off the narcotics. He still has about 7 days of antibiotic treatment, due to the central line/arterial line infections. The only line he has now is a PICC (peripheral inserted central catheter). So far noooooooooooooo infection in this line & let's keep it that way. His belly remains distended, but he is up to full feeds by tube. Enough of all that medical talk.

Blake found 'Larry the Lizard' and loves him again! That is his pacifier taped to a lizard. He is bonking his head again and playing with his keys! Best of all, I have been able to hold him again. Physical therapy and occupational therapy has been ordered today. (Debbie with P.T., thanks for calling yesterday, I wish you were here. We will look for you when you return from your trip.)

It's great to see Blake coming out of the fog. Blake looks forward to tomorrow, because daddy will be back. Chad is in Dallas for business today. We pray for safe flight today and drive tomorrow. I hope you will all have a wonderful weekend. Just remember you can always turn to GOD in the most stressful situation.

Love,  
*Kimberly :)*



**Blake's Favorite "Larry The Lizard" Pacifier**

♥ November 08, 2005 at 11:24 AM CST

Good Tuesday to Everyone! Sometime today Blake will move out of the CVICU down to floor 7 to the PCU. Blake had a good weekend and the doctors think it is time for him to move away from the ICU as he doesn't need such close attention anymore. In the PCU, Blake will have his own room still and Mommy will be able to stay with him day and night. Hopefully Blake will be able to come home in a week or two. We'll see. Blake will be getting antibiotics for 4 more days and then the latest central line can come out. Mommy and Daddy will sleep a little easier once this line is out. As you all know...any central line helps give needed meds. but is also a possible source of infection itself. Blake started to show his old personality somewhat over this past weekend. He's finally out of the 'sedative fog' as Mommy calls it. He was awake all day Sunday and about half the day Monday. It's good to see him shake his toy keys and bat at his book. 'Blake's Back!'

Both Kimberly and I wanted to thank Grandma & Grandpa Kramr for their special gift over the weekend. Kimberly and I were treated to a room at the Marriott Saturday night with a breakfast buffet Sunday morning. This was a real treat. Kimberly had slept on a sofa in the hospital Friday night, and with the possibility of Blake moving and needing one of us to be with him full time ...a good night sleep was like gold! Thank you so much Mary and Eddie Joe! The king size bed felt like an ocean to us. Also, thanks to Blake's Aunt Michelle for cooking extra portions of food us this weekend. A home cooked meal tastes so good these days. Everything has been yummy! You're a good cook! (ha, ha...inside joke) Really, everything was awesome! Latest information from Houston included a transfer time this afternoon for Blake. Kimberly can't wait to be with her boy 24 hours again!

We thank everyone for their continued prayers for our son Blake and for our family. Day by day Blake is improving. It's been a long road. We're looking forward to better holidays to close out this year. Have a good day!

*Daddy Chad*

♥ November 11, 2005 at 11:32 AM CST

Time for a Friday update... Since our last message Blake has indeed been moved down to the 7th floor into the PCU, room 7 in fact. Blake had room 9 on the 9th floor and now room 7 on the 7th. This is good for Daddy, as it keeps it a little easier remembering where the family is when calling to check up on Blake and Mommy.

In the PCU parents are expected to stay with the patients 24 hours for the most part. Kimberly really enjoys being able to be with her boy...but with all the scheduled meds. and time to time respiratory needs, Kimberly is not getting enough sleep. The sleep she does get is only for an hour at a time before something interrupts her nap. Daddy will be taking over the weekend shifts and hopefully Kimberly will be able to catch up on her zzzzz. Kimberly is ready to come home, that's for sure.

But Blake is not quite ready to come home yet. Last night Blake was working harder to breath, probably because he was positive on his fluids for the day. So today they will be giving Blake a couple extra doses of diuretics to get that fluid out. Blake also is getting his second tooth in, and that may have been contributing to his restlessness. We are hoping for a better weekend! By the way, Blake passed the 20 lbs. mark at his last weigh in. Some of that is this extra fluid of course, but most is just him.

We can not believe we have a one year old already. He is getting so big! Everything looks good as far as the heart surgery goes. What a relief to have that surgery over. We have had that weighing on our hearts for a long time...and it is such a good feeling to have that past us. We know there will be minor procedures in Blake's future, but hopefully no more big surgeries for a long, long time. (knock on wood) Thank you all for your prayers!

I hope everyone is excited about the Austin benefit next weekend. Special thanks to our closest friends and family for planning and preparing this big day. And foremost, thanks to Aunt Becky for all her time and hard work! Blake will probably not be home quite yet for the benefit...but we'll see. We are hoping to all be home again in the

next couple of weeks. Enjoy the weekend everyone! Blessing to all of you!

Until the next update...Over & Out.

*Chad*

P.S.- Please include Bob and Catherine Stapleton in your prayers as they are expecting their first child in the next week or so...a guaranteed beautiful girl.

♥ November 14, 2005 at 10:59 AM CST

**G**ood Monday, (yawn!) Yes, I know there are a few others out there yawning like me this morning too. After taking over a few night shifts...I have to give props to my wife for making it through the week. Kimberly landed hard Saturday night at the 'House of Payne' and was able to get her first decent night sleep in several days. Daddy enjoyed taking over ...but (yawn) is feeling it this morning. After sleeping a few hours last night, and starting the drive to Austin at 4:30 am...forgive me for keeping today's update brief.

I'll include more details in the next days, but the plan is to try to get Blake home in the next two weeks. Possibly this week, if we can get that extra fluid off and improve his respiratory needs. Blake needs around 2 liters of O2 a minute and around three good suction passes a day to keep him breathing well. We hope to make some progress in these areas in the next days.

Also, Blake's abdomen is swollen with fluid and the doctor's are reviewing options as to how to address this. We asked if Dr. Menefee, who did Blake's hernia surgery and drained similar fluid off Blake back in April could take a look at Blake again. Many thanks for prayers directed to these concerns. The main reason I wanted to send an update this morning was to direct everyone to the latest photos in

the Photo Gallery. **Daddy loves the one with Blake's face washed with sunshine.** I'm so looking forward to seeing that cute face out in the sun again. Please focus prayers to Blake's continued improvements and to coming home soon. We need to get him out of that hospital before any new bugs set in! Here's to a great week...(last yawn)

Take Care!

***Daddy Chad***

P.S.- Kimberly, you are definitely 'Mommy/Wife of the Year.'

***I Love You.***



***Blake, You Are Our Blessed Hope Of Sunshine!***