

All in a day's work

Written by Mandy Hochstedler

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A fateful visit to the Logan County Health District's Women, Infants and Children program in October likely saved a local infant's life.

Sarah Pickering of Bellefontaine said she and her family members didn't observe anything unusual about her son Zaiden Bates, born Sept. 10, prior to his newborn appointment at the agency. However, former LCHD public health and WIC nurse Rebecca "Becky" Simmons noticed that something was wrong with the child soon after he fell asleep in his car seat during his visit.

"It sounded like a baby having respiratory distress," Ms. Simmons said of a specific grunting noise that Zaiden made while he was sleeping. "So I pulled out my stethoscope and I detected a heart murmur."

Ms. Simmons said she also noticed that the baby's weight was low and the muscles by his rib cage were retracting, all signs of potential heart trouble, and advised Ms. Pickering to see a doctor immediately about the issue. At a Logan View Pediatrics appointment later that afternoon, Ms. Pickering's doctor ordered an electrocardiogram and X-rays for the infant.

"I wouldn't have done any of these tests if it weren't for Becky because we didn't know anything was wrong with him," Ms. Pickering said.

When test results came back the next day, a doctor instructed Ms. Pickering, her boyfriend Zach Bates and their son to go directly to Nationwide Children's Hospital by squad. After they arrived, Zaiden's heart stopped beating and he stopped breathing around 2 p.m. However, doctors were able to resuscitate the baby after about 20 minutes.

"I was thinking that he wasn't going to make it," Ms. Pickering said.

The family learned that the infant's near-death experience stemmed from congenital heart disease, which occurs in about 8 to 10 of every 1,000 children. The disease can cause a variety of heart-related issues, which for Zaiden included a hole in the upper chamber of his heart and another hole in the lower chamber, high blood pressure and patent ductus arteriosus, when the blood bypasses the lungs, preventing oxygen to circulate throughout the body.

To work on these problem areas, the then six-week-old had to undergo a three-hour open heart surgery the next week.

"When I found out that he was going to have surgery, all I could do was cry," said Ms. Simmons. "I knew that if he wouldn't have come in that day (to the health district), he might not have made it."

Zaiden was released from the hospital just three days after the procedure. Today, he is at home and is doing well at a healthy 14 lbs., 4 oz. He now only has a small hole in his heart and makes periodic hospital checkups.

"How Becky ever caught this — it's just a miracle," Zaiden's great-grandmother Judy Pickering of Bellefontaine said. "We



Zaiden Bates, center, who is 4 months old today, is the center of attention Monday in his Bellefontaine home between Rebecca Simmons, left, former Logan County Health District public health and WIC nurse, and his mother, Sarah Pickering. He has experienced a full recovery following heart surgery.

EXAMINER PHOTO | MANDY HOCHSTEDLER



Zaiden Bates of Bellefontaine recovers Oct. 21 in Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus following a three-hour open heart surgery when he was six weeks old.

FAMILY PHOTO

really attribute Becky to saving his life.

"I told her that God must really have a special purpose for him."

Ms. Simmons now works at the Champaign County Health District after being laid off from her LCHD position as a result of the agency's failed operating levy. Her face lit up with excitement Monday when she got to see baby Zaiden again.

"It makes us all very happy to see how healthy he is today," she said.

Logan County WIC

The federally funded WIC program provides nutrition education and breastfeeding support, referral for health care, immunization screening and referral, and supplemental foods. It is locally administered by the Logan County Health District, which currently serves about 1,170 clients a month.

Those eligible for the program include pregnant women; women who have a baby less than six months old; breastfeeding mothers; and mothers and children at nutritional or medical risk; all of whom must meet WIC income guidelines.

Call 599-3345 for an appointment or for more information.

Contact e-mail: mhochstedler@examiner.org