

# Unexpected journey to the NICU

## Care for the entire family

Becoming parents hasn't been easy for Jeremy and Bethany Heidemann. After three years of trying to have a baby – the couple turned to medicine to fulfill their dream. After undergoing surgery and multiple fertility treatments Bethany was finally pregnant.

“We had a rough road,” said Bethany Heidemann. “But we were thrilled when we found out we were expecting. Initially we had a few bumps but we got through it all and things were going really well.”

That is – until Bethany's routine doctor's appointment at 30 weeks. Her obstetrician determined she was measuring a little small and further tests indicated their daughter, Maggie, wasn't getting the nourishment she needed to continue to grow. Bethany was put on bed rest and days later it was determined Maggie's health was in jeopardy. At 31 weeks and 1 day gestation, Maggie was born on January 7, weighing just two pounds, six ounces.

She was immediately rushed to St. Luke's Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

“St. Luke's has neonatologists and neonatal nurse practitioners in the hospital 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so if an unexpected difficulty arises we are minutes away,” said Andrew Nordine, MD, St. Luke's NICU neonatologist. “Maggie came out breathing on her own and we provided a little bit of support for the first couple hours of her life. After that she needed help feeding, which is pretty typical for a baby at her gestation.”

“The day Maggie was born St. Luke's had all hands on deck,” said Jeremy Heidemann. “The doctors and nurses were really checking her over. I felt like she was really getting the care she needed. Dr. Nordine helped us feel a lot more comfortable after we knew Maggie was in his hands. The nurses and everyone in St. Luke's NICU were great – I just can't say enough about what they did for all of us.”

“I really appreciated that all of the St. Luke's NICU staff kept us informed about what was going on with Maggie's care,” said Bethany. “It wasn't just that she was the patient – they treated us like our entire family was their patient.”

Jeremy and Bethany Heidemann of Urbana are happy to have daughter Maggie home after a five week stay in St. Luke's NICU.

They cared about us so much, it was amazing.”

## Caring for Cedar Rapids tiniest babies

St. Luke's NICU cares for the tiniest babies in Cedar Rapids – babies as young as 23 weeks gestation. A typical pregnancy lasts 40 weeks. St. Luke's is the only Regional Level II NICU in Cedar Rapids, which means other hospitals transfer newborns who need specialized care to St. Luke's.

As the only hospital in Cedar Rapids that provides round-the-clock neonatal care, St. Luke's skilled team of neonatologists, nurse practitioners, pediatricians, nurses and other staff are always available to respond immediately to whatever needs arise.

“It's a pleasure to work with a team of people that are committed to providing the best possible outcome for every patient,” said Dr. Nordine. “We're proud of what we do for our patients and their families. Our outcomes are among the best in the country and result directly from committed teamwork, empowered families, and community support.”

“No question was a stupid question to them,” said Bethany. “They answered all of our questions about Maggie's care and really made us feel like the

St. Luke's NICU was our home, which it basically was for five weeks.”

## Family-centered care

St. Luke's practices family-centered care, which means the parents are part of their child's care team. Each baby has its own private suite, which can be individualized for each newborn to promote faster healing and growth. Parents can either room-in with their baby or use the sleep rooms to remain close. A family lounge is also available for parents.

“Before Maggie was born we never gave much thought to the NICU,” said Jeremy. “We never thought we'd wind up there and it's unfortunate that we had to be in that situation but we felt very fortunate to be where we were.”

“Babies need to do three things before they can go home from the NICU,” said Dr. Nordine. “They need to breathe without stopping, keep their temperature normal in a crib and grow on what they'll eat at home the way they'll eat at home. Maggie needed a little help with that last one, but she figured it out.”

After five weeks in St. Luke's NICU Maggie was ready to go home – just shy of Bethany's original due date of March 10.

“We love to see our patients carried home to sleep in their own crib and be cared for by their own parents,” said Dr. Nordine. “It's a special day for everyone involved.”

“There are not words to express how much we appreciate the care the St. Luke's NICU team gave Maggie and us,” said Bethany. “Everyone went above and beyond. We recommend St. Luke's to others because we were very happy with our care and would never go anywhere else.”

“Our journey to have Maggie has been a bit of a blur,” said Jeremy. “But the payoff has been well worth it and we're thankful for the excellent care.”

■ For a personal tour of our birth suites or Newborn Intensive Care call 319/369-8129 or take a video tour at [stlukescr.org](http://stlukescr.org).

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