

# ditorial & Opinion

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## Cardiac child becomes family's Christmas miracle

**T**he ultrasound confirmed that there was a new, little person within my wife. We made the event a family affair, and our two girls giggled as the technician told them they would soon have a baby brother.

But after a few minutes, the room grew eerily silent. There was something wrong. "It's probably nothing," the technician said uneasily. I hurriedly ushered our two girls out as my wife underwent further testing.

A couple of anxious weeks later, a doctor confirmed our fears. Our son-to-be would have serious heart complications and would likely be born blue. Worse, there could be further complications to other organs. Our wonderful extended family, friends, neighbors and church groups prayed for our son. But in late May, Trevor James Muth was born gray on his way to blue as he was quickly whisked away by a proficient team at Magee en route to Children's Hospital. A balloon was inserted into his heart to get some oxygen while doctors determined what the next steps would be.

The cardiac intensive care unit at Children's was fabulous. Doctors and nurses worked nonstop and treated us with compassion and



Ray Muth

Guest Column

encouragement. Trevor stabilized and was able to get 70 percent of a normal oxygen supply. They told us if he could gain some weight, he'd have a better chance of surviving his future surgery.

The best-case scenario for Trevor's future was an open-heart procedure that would give him a 50 percent chance of living to age 20. He'd have numerous open-heart procedures and limitations on what he could physically do. While that was not easy to accept, it was impossible not to be moved and encouraged by the courageous little wounded warriors who were in the rooms, the hallways and the elevators of Children's Hospital. The light of hope that shone in their eyes was a beacon that transcended their physical problems.

And so from them, we learned to truly live day by day. Each day we had our little boy with the purple feet it was a precious gift, a great

day. Cardiac kids often have a hard time keeping weight on, and we rejoiced for the weeks Trevor would gain even an ounce or two.

After a series of ups and downs, Trevor took a sudden turn for the better. He was almost growing normally and adding pounds instead of ounces. Best of all, he developed an ever-present smile. The cardiologist told us that Trevor's progress was astounding and if he could somehow make it to six months, it would be the optimal time to perform surgery.

All we could do was hope and pray, love and encourage our son. A month before Trevor's scheduled six-month surgery we received a call from the cardiologist. A new heart surgeon had just come to Children's Hospital with an innovative operation for precisely Trevor's series of conditions. This new open-heart surgery had risks, but it would make Trevor's anatomy almost normal. He might not need any added surgery and might not have any physical restrictions. Trevor would be the first in Pittsburgh to have this surgery performed. We were stunned.

Our toughest moment was handing our smiling son to the anesthesiologist. But one of our greatest

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moments came a tortuous eight hours later as Trevor's weary surgeon said all was good.

That was in late November. And two weeks ago, Trevor's cardiologist told us he looked "super" and he didn't have to come back for six months. His color is pink for the first time. His feet are no longer purple.

At six months old, he's now 19 pounds, a virtual hulk for a cardiac kid. And his ever-present smile has grown even broader. There are no words to express our gratefulness to God, family, friends and the remarkable people at Children's Hospital for giving us our Christmas miracle.

My wife and I know that our mission has only begun. We know there are many other children and parents who need our prayers, encouragement and support. In some way, we hope to help many other Christmas miracles happen, too.

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*Ray Muth, a former community columnist for the Valley News Dispatch, now lives in Gibsonia.*

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