

Pregnancy is a time of hope because our children change our lives. David and Suzanne Riccio were certainly excited while awaiting the birth of their third child. When a fetal sonogram, done at 20 weeks into the pregnancy, revealed that their baby's heart had only one ventricle instead of two, there was a profound affect on the dreams that they had for this child.



Having only one ventricle meant that the old blood already used by her body would mix with the freshly oxygenated blood from the lungs so that she would not get all of the oxygen that she needed. Complex and weighty medical decisions had to be made. At 37 weeks Suzanne was sent from Redding to UC San Francisco Medical Center for delivery. Shortly after birth

Sarah was intubated. That meant that a tube was passed through her mouth, down her throat and into her lungs in an attempt to give her a richer oxygen supply...the tube stayed in for two months. On the second day of Sarah's life she had her first heart surgery and then had three more in those first two months. She was not feeding well and was at risk for aspirating food into her lungs so at 2 1/2 months a tube was placed directly into her stomach for feeding. During her seven month stay in the hospital she suffered several serious infections. What a way to enter our world!



When she was finally well enough to go home she wasn't a simple bundle in mom's arms...she had a nasal cannula and oxygen tank to give her enriched air to breath. She was dependent on a gastrostomy tube and kangaroo pump for feeding and she was on multiple



medications. Mom and Dad were now trained in pulmonology, gastroenterology, cardiology and nursing...certainly a bit more than making formula and changing diapers.

Home...this is where the Elks came in to help. Sarah is fragile and is in a state of congestive heart failure. The slightest cold or the flu can be life threatening to her. She is unable to go to a center for the regular treatments she needs. Through your support of the Major Project, you, as Elks, were able to send a highly trained Physical Therapist, Denise Wilson, to the Riccio's home to help them with Sarah's developmental needs. When it became necessary for them to move to Middletown, because of the scope of the Major Project there was help there too.





Weekly visits from Sheila McCarthy, Occupational Therapist and Brian Ferritaylor, Physical Therapist, were begun and continue to be provided without charge. Her family is a major facet of her program because her parents and her nurse, Mary, are still learning to give Sarah the best care possible. Sheila helps with the feeding and daily hand use skills and Brian is helping Sarah to acquire the skills needed to move her body efficiently and safely.

Somewhere in those first months Sarah suffered some paralysis of her right side. Every developmental lesson she has learned has had to be modified to accommodate a right hand and leg that is weak, uncoordinated and just doesn't feel right...and she's learned them all! When services were begun in Middletown, Sarah was 20 months old and could not get to a sitting or standing position on her own. She has continued therapy

needs directed towards activities of daily living, distances in walking, climbing stairs and some social decision making and following guidelines of expectations for school and community activities. Today, at six years



old, she walks fast, nearly running, and is close to jumping. She has a sister Krystina, age 12 and a brother Jacob, age 10, who she tries hard to keep up with.

This is success for Sarah and for the efforts of her family, but they are yours also. When you see Sarah walk it is a success for you as Elks and you should be proud.



California-Hawaii Elks Major Project, Inc.
5450 E. Lamona Avenue
Fresno, CA 93727-2224
(559) 255-4531 ~ Fax (559) 456-2659
www.chea-elks.org ~ chea@chea-elks.org

2006 Theme Child



Sarah Riccio

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