



# bear facts newsletter

AUTUMN / WINTER • 2019

Official Newsletter of **Perth Children's Hospital Foundation**

## Samuel gives you the thumbs up



Samuel was born critically ill with multiple heart problems. The blood flow in his heart was reversed, starving his tiny body of oxygen. His life depended on his safe and immediate transfer to Perth Children's Hospital for emergency open heart surgery.

He was taken there in a new Newborn Emergency Transports Service (NETS) ambulance thanks to generous donors like you who helped us fund it.

This ambulance is very special! It replicates an intensive care environment for newborns – but on wheels. This is only possible because it has received a specific custom fit-out. It is complete with an incubator, ventilator, monitoring devices, infusion pumps and nitric oxide.

The team can easily see the baby during transit, and monitor any changes without having to stop the vehicle.

After seven weeks in hospital, Samuel is home and doing well.

“We are extremely grateful to Perth Children's Hospital Foundation and their donors for funding the new ambulance,” says Acting NETS WA Medical Director Dr Jonathon Davis.

“It was a scary journey, but we felt he was in amazingly good hands,” says his mum Martina.

Each year **1,100** preterm and sick babies like Samuel are transferred to hospital via NETS from across WA.

NETS ambulance services transfer babies within a huge **2,500km** area.



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# Thank you

Welcome to our special edition of Bear Facts.

**When you support the world class facilities at Perth Children's Hospital, one area you fund is intensive care for newborns. Your generosity saves extremely precious lives – those of our most vulnerable babies.**

There's no time to waste when a baby is born too early, or critically ill. The care they receive minute by minute dictates the kind of future they and their family will have.

Sick or premature babies have less chance of surviving and avoiding long-term health issues if they don't receive urgent intervention by expert medical staff using the most advanced technology and techniques.

Thanks to the support we receive from many individuals, community groups and organisations, the wonderful NICU team in the hospital gives critically ill babies throughout Western Australia the best chance to live their healthiest and happiest lives.

However, more funding for pioneering research, world class expertise and innovative equipment is still required.

Our cherished babies deserve the very best. Thank you for giving them a fighting chance.

Carrick Robinson  
Chief Executive Officer



# Zoe's fight



Zoe needed to be brave from the moment she arrived in the world. After her mum Erin went into labour, doctors found Zoe was distressed. She was delivered by an emergency caesarean at St John of God Hospital then rushed into Perth Children's Hospital for urgent tests.

Unfortunately Zoe had Meconium Aspiration Syndrome, when an unborn baby inhales or swallows its own faeces. This caused respiratory problems and stopping her getting enough oxygen. She was also having unexplained seizures.

So her brain's electrical activity could be continuously monitored, Zoe was put on a Brainz Monitor funded by generous supporters like you. Without this state-of-the-art monitor, a baby's seizures can easily be missed because they can be as subtle as lip smacking, yawning or small jerks of a limb.

Thankfully, even though Zoe was a very sick little girl, she has made a great recovery and is now home with her happy parents.

A Brainz Monitor accurately tracks electrical impulses in a baby's brain, letting medical staff more easily assess any seizure activity without hurting or distressing them. Thank you to Rio Tinto and Be Giving for contributing to the purchase of Brainz Monitors for the hospital.

For the latest from the Foundation follow us on      pchfwa

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# A mattress saves Noah



Noah using the Medi-Therm Cooling System you helped us buy.

Claire had five weeks left until her due date when she couldn't feel her baby moving inside her and knew something wasn't right. She called her local hospital and a few hours later little Noah made his dramatic entrance into the world.

Born by an emergency caesarean, Noah needed to be resuscitated as he had lacked oxygen for up to five minutes prior to his birth.

Babies deprived of oxygen and blood to the brain, at birth or just beforehand, are at risk of brain injury or death. When Noah was just hours old he had two seizures which led to swelling on his brain.

A high temperature was causing the swelling. To bring it down, doctors rushed Noah onto the Medi-Therm Cooling System at Perth Children's Hospital.

The system constantly monitors the child and adjusts the temperature to maintain the desired level. Then over the next 12 hours the child is gradually warmed to a normal temperature of 36.5°C.

"I don't want to think what might have happened to Noah without this equipment," says Claire. "He's now a perfectly healthy little boy. We're incredibly grateful."



Noah's living a healthy, happy life.

The Medi-Therm system costs over \$20,000 and was bought for the hospital with the help of our supporters like you. It consists of a mattress which keeps babies like Noah cooled to a stable temperature 33.5°C for 72 hours – the period recommended for optimum outcomes.

**Technological advancements mean upgrades to vital equipment are needed continually to keep Perth Children's Hospital at the forefront of paediatric health care. Thank you for your help with this.**

# Miracle twins - Harper and Arthur

Nicola was only 24 weeks and five days into her pregnancy when her sons Harper and Arthur were born. Thousands of kilometres away at the time, their dad Steven had to listen in to their urgent caesarean birth by phone.

Being extremely premature, both boys had many health problems that required treatment in the neonatal intensive care unit at Perth Children's Hospital.

Harper's already compromised lungs were ravaged by a bacterial infection. Then it spread to his bloodstream. For eight weeks he needed multiple blood transfusions and strong antibiotics.

Arthur had a major bleed on his brain when he was born that caused it to swell. The pressure led to further brain bleeds. Doctors had to drain fluid out daily with a needle, while his parents lived in terror he'd have an infection like his brother – only in his brain. A shunt seemed to help until Arthur's condition suddenly deteriorated again.

"We were told he had a hole in his heart," Steven remembers. "The poor little mite was on morphine to manage pain. It was heartbreaking and terrifying."

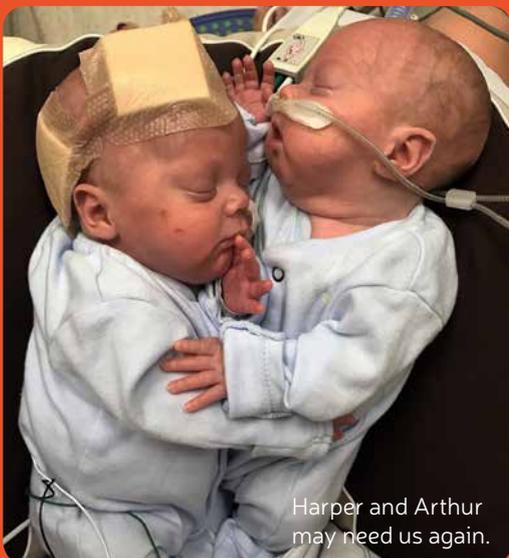


Nicola with her newborn twins Harper and Arthur.

"Several times we thought we might lose Arthur ... Every time, the team drove into action and brought him back to us."

After many weeks in hospital, Steven and Nicola were incredibly relieved to finally go home with both their boys. Harper is meeting his milestones but Arthur has more long-term medical concerns and may need our help again in the future.

"It wasn't how I imagined we would become parents," remembers Nicola of her boys' shock birth.



Harper and Arthur may need us again.

**Backed by our fantastic donors, we funded a Video Laryngoscope for NICU that is teaching medical staff how to confidently resuscitate newborns like Harper and Arthur.**

When an illness or abnormality stops them breathing on their own, this can save them from brain damage – or death.

The vital resuscitation skill of endotracheal intubation is traditionally practiced on dolls. But if a trainee is trying it on a real baby and has difficulties, their supervisor can't see why.

A Video Laryngoscope shows both a trainee and instructor what's going wrong in real emergencies, so problems can be corrected sooner, giving better outcomes to babies who need this lifesaving procedure.

# Pippa's back where it all began

"Mum said I was the colour of a chicken," Pippa says, "sleeping too much and not feeding properly."

In 1976, newborn Pippa was raced by ambulance to Perth Children's Hospital when it was still called Princess Margaret Hospital, from the country town of Goomalling.

She had severe jaundice from the incompatibility between her mother's and her own blood groups, which caused a build-up of dead red cells in her blood. Untreated, this can lead to serious complications – even brain damage.

Pippa's treatment in NICU included transfusions and phototherapy. After a month, she was ready to go home. But now Pippa is back to where it all began – the NICU at the hospital – as a nurse this time.

Pippa started out in neonatal nursing in 2001. "I love it and can't imagine working anywhere else," she says.

In an unbelievable coincidence, in 2006 when Pippa and her husband welcomed their own bundle of joy, Luka, he also needed to spend time in the NICU because he was so small, although he was full-term.



Pippa Markovic – the NICU nurse who was once a baby patient.

"I didn't realise how traumatising that was for new mums until it happened to me. It gave me a new perspective as a nurse when dealing with similar situations."

"You get to know the parents," says Pippa. "Often they become almost like family."

## David, we salute you



David's granddaughter is a doctor at the hospital.

We farewelled the incredibly selfless David Mitchinson in December, after he had served the Foundation as a volunteer for 20 years. He is 84, and every week came in to help us with office jobs like mail-outs and event pack preparation. His passion for the Foundation started when his daughter Joanne received care at the hospital, followed by his grandson Brock. "The Foundation is something special," David says. "When you have children and family that have spent time in hospital, you just want to support them in any way you can. It's something the community should support."

**Would you like to volunteer for the Foundation?  
Call Volunteer Coordinator – Nicole Sachse  
(08) 6456 5550 for more information.**

# Ollie's rough road

Sarah was 13 weeks pregnant when she and her husband Elliott were told their baby had Gastroschisis – his abdominal wall muscles hadn't formed properly. Oliver was born with his intestines outside his body, poking through a hole where his belly button should have been.

It was just the beginning of a very long journey which started in the hospital's NICU. "It was so difficult to watch him go through so much," remembers Sarah.

A sterile bag was put over Oliver's exposed bowels to stop infection, while over six days gravity began the job of dropping them back into his abdominal cavity.

It wasn't until he was 19 days old that his tubes were removed and his parents could finally give him his first cuddle. At six weeks old he was home, with the hole in his abdomen closed, and more surgery planned for when he was older to repair his muscles.

Unfortunately Oliver has been back in hospital for a bowel obstruction when he was three years old, and a leak of fluid into his lungs when he was four. Both times, he needed emergency surgery.

"We don't know if he'll have further issues," says Sarah. "But the care we have received at the hospital is second to none. The NICU nurses got us through the hardest time of our lives and we will be forever grateful."



Ollie now wants to become a doctor, and help other kids the way he was helped.



## You helped us buy Giraffe Warmers for our sickest newborns – babies like Oliver.

Giraffe Warmers are special neonatal beds with an overhead heat lamp that keeps babies warm and content, and helps them grow.

Their design also gives staff easy access to monitor temperature, weight, oxygen levels, and pulse rate, and even to resuscitate their tiny patients – all with minimal movement, which has been shown to improve the outcomes of medically unstable babies.

# “She is a little fighter”



“She fought so hard to be in this world,” says Aliyah’s mum, Brittany.

Born 15 weeks too early, Aliyah weighed just 620 grams – not much more than a tin of baked beans. Against the odds she survived, although she still has many lung issues.

“We were told it was very likely that she wouldn’t make it, but we kept on believing and hoping,” says her mum Brittany.

Aliyah has spent more than 10 months at Perth Children’s Hospital.

She was recently taken on her first walk outside the hospital.

After her life has been in the balance for so long, her family is overjoyed to see her getting stronger by the day. She now weighs more than 10 times her birth weight. Brittany hopes she will be able to come home for her first birthday after her lungs develop a little more.

“The staff at Perth Children’s Hospital have been amazing,

and the care and support we’ve received from the nurses has just been incredible.”

“We are just so blessed to have such an amazing facility in Perth to look after our kids,” says Brittany.

**You save lives like Aliyah’s by donating to care and medical equipment such as**

**Portable ultrasound machines** for doctors to diagnose problems with newborns less invasively at their bedside, and administer treatments like finding a vein and inserting a line to use for medications.

**Ventilators** that help premature babies breathe if their lungs are not fully developed, or an infection or medications slow or stop their breathing.



Aliyah with her mum and dad.

## Cherry auction raises a record \$135,450 for the Foundation



Last December in this fantastic annual Market City charity event, Perth 'Spud King' Tony Galati became the proud owner of the state's most expensive cherries after he placed a bid of \$100,000 on a 5kg box. All funds will go to the Centre of Excellence for Childhood Burns at Perth Children's Hospital, led by Professor Fiona Wood.

The generosity and support of WA's fresh produce wholesalers and retailers over close to three decades has meant the Foundation could provide many more grants for specialist medical equipment and research at Perth Children's Hospital.

**A big thank you to Market West, Tony, and all our bidders for their generous support!**

# Thank you to all our wonderful Big Walkers

Our community came together on Sunday March 17 to raise much needed funds for sick kids in hospital.

The 6km walk took in the beautiful surrounds of the Swan River and Optus Stadium with fantastic activities and entertainment for all the family along the way.

Every dollar raised helps the children and young people of WA live their healthiest and happiest lives.



## Run for WA's sick children - May 19

**Transform young people's lives - register now for the HBF Run for a Reason.**

Walk or run at your own pace. Choose your distance from either 4km, 12km or half marathon. To start fundraising for Perth Children's Hospital, register at [www.hbfrun.com.au](http://www.hbfrun.com.au)

For more information, contact Community Fundraising Manager, Sarah McNamara, on (08) 6456 5554 or [sarah.mcnamara@pCHF.org.au](mailto:sarah.mcnamara@pCHF.org.au)

**Thank you for your support!**



## YES, I would like to help babies receive world-class care

You can make a gift by visiting our website, phoning us or completing this form and mailing it to **PO Box 8249 Subiaco East WA 6008**

### Please complete for tax receipting purposes

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Card holder name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

- Yes, I would like to receive information about leaving a gift in my Will to Perth Children's Hospital Foundation.
- Yes, I have left a gift in my Will to the Perth Children's Hospital Foundation.

**Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity!**