



'It's a miracle she's still alive'

Family holds fund-raiser for daughter who needs transplant

By Brian Wellner
Staff writer

Georgi and Frank Clements think it's a miracle their daughter, Mia, was ever born.

The Villa Park couple discovered their baby was born without two functioning kidneys, a condition specialists are calling extremely rare.

Mia requires a machine to breathe, is smaller than most infants her age and is in need of a functioning kidney. Her parents had to make the difficult decision of whether to keep the baby alive on a breathing machine or let her go.

In November, doctors at Loyola University Medical Center in Maywood induced labor 10 weeks before Mia was due after learning the amniotic fluid, a child's lifeline, was depleted.

"You never imagine it would happen to you," Georgi Clements said. "You hear other cases and wonder how are they so strong. I have a choice to deal with the disease and love this baby. If we don't take care of the baby the way we do, she'll die."

She added, "It's a miracle she's still alive."

"We were told this was a rare case, that most babies wouldn't live in this condition," Frank Clements said.

The Clements recalled that their baby, weighing a little more than 3 pounds at birth, underwent five surgeries during her first two weeks.

Dr. Jonathan Morasces, professor of pediatrics at Loyola, made the decision to induce labor. Having monitored Mia's progress weeks before she was born, he said that her amniotic fluid dropped to nothing, caus-

How to help

There will be a benefit dinner at the Elmhurst Elks Lodge 1531, 711 St. Charles Road, Sunday, June 22. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for children ages 4 to 11. The dinner is open to the public.

ing her lungs to shrivel up.

"She was surviving in a dry environment. And that's like a bear hug on the lungs," Morasces said. "If she stayed any longer in the womb, she would have died from squashed lungs."

Reports say children born as early as Mia have a 90 percent chance of survival. But the Clements feared their baby wouldn't survive surgery or long-term dialysis.

According to the National Kidney Foundation of Illinois, Mia has a rare case of multicystic dysplastic kidney disease in which an abnormal kidney grows large cysts and eventually stops functioning.

Dr. David A. Hatch, director of pediatric kidney transplants at Loyola, said infants with the disease typically suffer one malfunctioning kidney, citing one in 5,000 children born with the condition.

"It's very unusual to find both kidneys not functioning," he said. "I've been at Loyola for 15 years and I have never seen such a case."

This was not good news for the Clements, who needed input on how to take care of their ill daughter.

"We were totally in the dark," Georgi said. "We heard a lot of 'I don't knows' and 'Maybes.' Doctors couldn't even give us a definition of her disease. We found information



Staff photos by Sidney Thoms

The Clements family pose for a picture June 17 in their Villa Park home. Frank Clements holds his son, Frankie, while Georgi holds their daughter, Mia, shown wearing a dialysis tube. Mia was born in November without two functioning kidneys.

from a doctor's study on the Internet."

Frank added, "We didn't know about it and the doctors didn't know. That was the hardest part."

Mia required peritoneal dialysis to breathe and discharge toxins.

Finding a kidney donor may not take long. Newborn children are always put on top of what is now a waiting list of 54,917 people. The infant will need to grow to 22 pounds before undergoing a transplant.

Georgi has offered to donate one of her kidneys to her daughter.

With transplants averaging \$50,000, raising funds to pay for that and other medical costs

will be the Clements' next challenge.

Frank Clements said that keeping Mia alive on dialysis has already cost the family \$500,000. As a unioned plumber, Clements' insurance company will pay as much as \$1 million in medical expenses. But the family fears that will diminish before Mia has her transplant. And even after her transplant, the family will need to provide medications to assist in recovery.

Family members and friends of the Clements have created a Web site: miraclesformia.com. The Web site will assist anyone wishing to donate money and provide regular updates on Mia's condition.



The Hair to Stay beauty salon on St. Charles Road has a charity cup to collect donations for Mia Clements.