

Tiny Baby Celebrates 1st Birthday

12 Ounces At Birth, Hilea's 12 Pounds At Age 1

POSTED: 5:09 p.m. CDT June 25, 2002

UPDATED: 6:10 p.m. CDT June 25, 2002

CHICAGO -- NBC5's Anita Padilla said she was thrilled to report a story about the miracle of life.



Hilea at 1

Hilea Maurer weighed just 12 ounces when doctors delivered her at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove a year ago.

On Tuesday, the doctors who saved Hilea's life helped her celebrate her 1st birthday.

Hospital staff gathered to sing their rendition of "Happy Birthday" to the birthday girl. She's only a year old, but as Padilla reported, she's already given her parents a lifetime of joy simply by beating the odds.

"The first month was up and down," said the baby's father, Mark Maurer. "Every day was critical."

"(It was) an emotional rollercoaster," Anne Maurer said of her daughter's tiny beginning. "We're proud when we can hold her and know that she's okay."



Mark, Anne and Hilea Maurer

Hilea was delivered 14 weeks early. On the day she was born, she weighed just 12 ounces. She was so tiny, Padilla said, that one nurse recalled that the infant's arm went right through a wedding band.



Hilea as a newborn

Nurse Mickey Kosobucki said her ring went "all the way up to her shoulder."

"So you can see how much she's grown," she added.

The reason doctors took the baby at just 26 weeks gestation is because her mother's placenta wasn't providing adequate nutrition to the baby. Padilla said that doctors claim that what's important in cases such as this is not the baby's weight at time of delivery, but the stage of development. Doctors felt Hilea was at a safe point for them to deliver last year.

On her 1st birthday Tuesday, the baby weighed 12 pounds. The team of doctors and countless nurses who helped her through her first four difficult months were amazed, Padilla said, to see Hilea's growth and progress.



Dr. Michael Fitzgerald

"She's doing all the things a baby her age should be doing," Dr. Michael Fitzgerald told NBC5.

Anne and Mark Maurer admitted that they were prepared for the worst for the first few days of their baby daughter's life. They even named her accordingly; Hilea in Hawaiian means "in remembrance of a loved one."

On Tuesday, the proud parents told Padilla that they think often about the years ahead for their daughter. As the NBC5 microphone neared her mouth, Hilea leaned toward it and let out a cry, prompting her parents to say that their prodigy may have to consider a future in broadcasting.

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