

Miracle Babies

A Surprise Pregnancy Became Double the Risk but

Double the Joy

This last year has been quite a shock for Bonnie and her husband, Jeremy. In fact, they had several increasingly larger shocks in a row. First, they discovered they were pregnant with their second child. Three weeks later, they learned it would be twins. Fast forward another three weeks and they discover the babies are not just twins, they're mono-mono (Monoamniotic) twins - the highest risk type of twin pregnancy with a 50-50 chance of live birth for both twins.

"We just had a lot to process because we wanted to get excited about the pregnancy, but there was also a lot of fear," says Bonnie. "It was a pretty scary situation."

That situation connected them to MAHEC. With a specialization in Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM), MAHEC Ob/Gyn Specialists has the only subspecialty boarded doctors who do high-risk care in the WNC region. It was started because of the need for women's healthcare in the area.

"Women used to have to travel to Duke, UNC, or Wake Forest if they needed high-risk care, but it became evident pretty quickly that traveling during pregnancy is often difficult," says Dr. Jennifer Warren, MAHEC MFM specialist and Ob/Gyn residency program director. "If MAHEC was going to provide pregnancy care, we wanted high-risk pregnancies to be an integral part of our services here."

Providing high-risk care for women across the region is no small job. It can include women with medical problems, such as diabetes, hypertension, thyroid disease, etc.; babies with differences, such as growth, structural, or heart problems; or women with substance use, which has been on the rise. MAHEC remotely looks at all the ultrasounds across the region to provide help with whether the women need referrals or if they're stable enough to stay with their provider.

"We have special expertise in prenatal diagnosis including ultrasound and diagnostic procedures," says Dr. Carol Coulson, head of the MAHEC MFM department. "The catchment area is so wide that the number of babies that have differences and the number of moms who have medical problems are



Family of Five: Jeremy and Bonnie are thrilled to have the entire family healthy and home together.

pretty substantial. Another important piece is that we function as a 24-hour hotline for doctors across the region who want to make sure they're doing the best thing for their patients."

Keeping those high-risk patients here in the community for care is done thanks to a collaborative relationship with Mission Hospital, which is a tertiary care center with the highest level NICU and pediatric subspecialty services.

That's something with which Bonnie and her family became all too familiar. She actually moved into the hospital at 24 weeks of pregnancy, leaving her three-year old daughter and husband at home. Though it seemed difficult at first, it meant the best possible outcome for the twins, and, to their surprise, it became a home away from home. They got to know the nurses, MAHEC residents, and all five MFM doctors on a personal level, which made all the difference when it came time to deliver a little bit early.

"The beautiful thing about that scenario was because I had been there for so long, all the doctors and nurses knew me and had been watching our babies for 50-some days," says Bonnie. "There was a lot of peace because we knew they were invested in getting these

girls here. They even knew their names and they knew our three-year old. They knew our family so well that it took away a lot of fear."

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That fear could be replaced with joy as three-year old Liberty became a big sister to 3-lb, identical twin girls, Haddie and Laynie. Though the twins both spent quite a bit of time in the NICU after birth, they are now double the weight and double the joy.

"Now that we're home, we can finally be a family unit," says Bonnie. "We're obviously relieved that our story ended up a successful one because we knew all along that there was a chance that it might not be. We're just thankful that it turned out everyone is here and safe and doing well. We received such great attention from MAHEC, and they made what sounded like a nightmare - leaving my kid and husband to live at the hospital - to be such a good situation. I was sad to leave because it felt like a family. But, overall, we're thankful that everybody is all together and we can be a family of five."