

## Mother Finds Strength in Faith, New Friends and Shriners Hospitals for Children

“God has given us a tremendous blessing with each of our sons, and we see it every day,” says **Michelle Cain**, mother of **Cody**, 8, and **Jonathan**, six months. “Cody is a wonderful big brother and is so thankful that his prayers to have a little brother have been answered.”

Cody's little brother Jonathan is a patient at Shriners Hospitals for Children -- Philadelphia. He was born with Beals syndrome, a genetic disorder that causes the permanent fixation of certain joints and may also cause curvature of the spine and



other abnormalities in the limbs, heart and eyes.

“We are so blessed that Jonathon's story came to the attention of Fred Widmyer, a Shriner and member of the Board of Governors at the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital,” Michelle said.

Widmyer personally explained Jonathan's case to **Randall Betz, M.D.**, a world renowned orthopaedic surgeon and chief of staff at the Philadelphia Shriners Hospital. After just one week, Dr. Betz's assistant, **Janet Cerrone**, contacted the Cain family to set up an appointment.

“As Janet and I were e-mailing back and forth, she told me ‘once you're in Shriners Hospitals, you're family,’” Michelle said. “We've found that Shriners Hospitals treats and cares for the whole situation and the needs of the whole family.”

For now, Dr. Betz is focusing on the curvature in Jonathan's spine and will fit him with a flexible back brace. During future visits, Jonathan will be seen by pediatric hand specialists who will likely fit him for splints to help extend his fingers and possibly his knees.

It's not only the excellent care and compassion that mean so much to the Cain family, but also the fact that Shriners Hospitals makes it available at no charge.

“We have insurance, but we still face substantial out-of-pocket costs for Jonathan's future care. What a blessing that Shriners Hospitals provides their



services, including transportation, meals and lodging free to us!” she says.

Recently, Michelle and her husband had another blessing enter their lives. Through Shriners Hospitals, they were connected to two other families with children who have Beals syndrome. The support and friendship they've experienced is helping them stay positive about the future.

“To not know anyone else with the same condition as your child is a lonely feeling,” Michelle said. “Our new friends - one of them is an adult living with Beals Syndrome - are very encouraging about Jonathan's future.”

“It's meant so much to us to get to know people living with the same experiences. Just one more blessing from Shriners Hospitals.”

## "Overcoming All Odds"

At just 9 months old, Amber Emerson endured the unimaginable when a citronella torch fell on her playpen. Liquids from inside the torch ignited 90% of the baby's body including her face, head, and limbs. Just days before, Amber's mother, Nancy, had placed the bamboo torch filled with insect repellent near their deck to keep mosquitoes away. She hoped it would protect her daughter from West Nile virus. On this warm summer day, Amber was sleeping in her playpen while her mother was painting on the deck. Nancy left the sleeping baby to quickly step inside for a glass of water. When she returned, she found Amber and her playpen "engulfed in flames."

Amber was immediately rushed to Mission Hospitals in Asheville, North Carolina. Doctors told the terrified mother there was nothing they could do for Amber because they were not a burn hospital. In their opinion, the odds of her making it through the night were slim if Amber was not rushed to the Shriners Hospitals for Children in Cincinnati. That evening, Nancy sat at the Cincinnati Shriners Hospital while her little girl struggled to stay alive. They stayed at the hospital for five months while Amber endured a number of sur-

geries including multiple amputations, skin grafts, and reconstruction. After her initial treatment in Cincinnati, Amber needed her amputations revised and then prosthetic legs to help her ambulate. That's where the Greenville Shriners Hospital stepped up. As soon as Amber received her first pair of prosthetic legs, she was up and walking.

Five years and 37 surgeries later, Amber returns often to both the Greenville and the Cincinnati Shriners Hospitals. Seventy-five percent of the little girls skin is grafts so she must return to Cincinnati as she grows to have additional skin grafts. Since Amber is very active, you will frequently see her at the Greenville Hospital where she is being fit for new prosthetic legs or getting adjustments to her current ones.

Nancy describes her daughter as high functioning, very active, and self confident. This past fall she began kindergarten and attends school along side of her big sister. Nancy believes "that would have never happened if Amber had been treated in a regular medical facility. The Shriners Hospitals look at the long term, her life as an adult, not just her as a child. They work at getting her to the best possible outcome as an adult. That would not happen at a regular medical system." Amber and the Emerson family say they will be forever grateful to the entire Shriners Hospitals system.



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