

## Hunter Henry



At 4:24 p.m. on Sept. 26, 2005, my brother was born. Hunter seemed like a very healthy, strong little boy. Until five days later, our lives were altered forever.

I had waited all my life to have a sibling, and I was very excited. My family was nervous that day because Hunter was six weeks premature, and the doctors didn't know if his lungs were fully developed yet.

After Hunter was born, he was put in the NICU and monitored carefully. I remember when I saw him for the first time. His arm couldn't have been bigger than the width of my thumb. The doctors had discovered that his lungs were underdeveloped, but he was improving rapidly. I remember the first thing that the doctors told us about Hunter was that he had a very strong heart.

Five days later, the doctors said that he could come home soon. I went to see him. While I was there, I had the feeling that something was wrong. As I was telling Hunter goodbye, I noticed that the nurses were bringing an ultrasound machine to Hunter's bed. This worried me, and I talked to my parents about it. They told me that the nurses were just giving Hunter a checkup before the doctor's rounds.

Later that day, I was at home when the phone rang. The first thing that I heard startled me. It was my dad, crying. Then, he told me the worst news of my life. He told me that the doctors had detected a rare and often fatal condition called Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome in Hunter. My dad explained to me that they would have to go to Chicago for his heart surgery.

Those next weeks were the worst of my life. I was horrified about what might happen to my baby brother. Halloween came and went, and then Thanksgiving. Finally, we got good news. Hunter was strong enough to come home.

After my new baby brother and my parents returned, we rejoiced. We were relieved that Hunter had made it through his first surgery. After his first surgery, Hunter went home and lived a normal life with a few exceptions. He was on an oxygen tank until his second surgery, he had a lot more doctor visits than an average baby, and he was not allowed to expose his scar. Hunter also had to take medicines with his bottle, and must have everything written down and regulated. In the meantime, Hunter was busy being a little boy. He fell in love with our four wheelers the first time we brought him for a ride! But, Hunter's absolute favorite thing to do at our house is to go outside and do yard work with our dad. This way, he not only has fun but he gets exercise, sun, and fresh air.

When the time for Hunter's second surgery came, we were very upset. Not only because Hunter had to have another surgery but, because the new life we had come to know was being disrupted. We had grown accustomed to having a baby around the house, and we got into a daily routine.

Hunter's second surgery wasn't as bad as the first one because, I was able to travel to Chicago with my family for Hunter's surgery, and Hunter only had to stay in the hospital for one week. Hunter made a fast recovery, and returned home within the month.

Although we were very thankful, we still couldn't help but worry about his future surgeries. Another thing that worried us, and still does, is that Hunter has a \$1 million lifetime limit on his insurance. With all of his medicines, surgeries and doctor visits, this is a small amount of money.



Now, Hunter is about to be two years old, and he loves being here. He will be going to Chicago to have his third and hopefully final surgery in September, and will remain in recovery through his birthday.

Hunter is known as the "miracle baby." He seems like any other kid, running, misbehaving and playing. But when you lift Hunter's shirt, you reveal the battle wounds of a tiny soldier who has been fighting for his life.