



Mikayla's Story

by Tammy Richardson

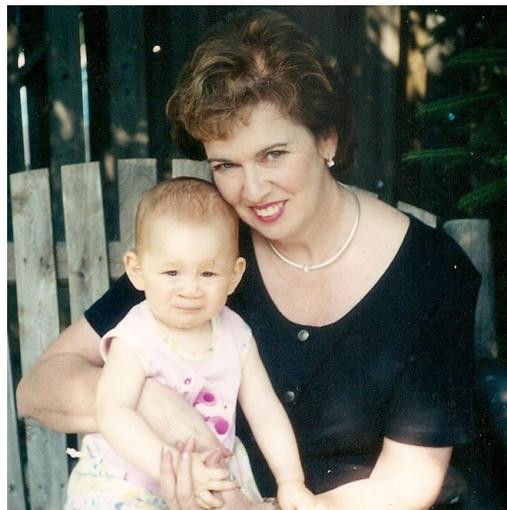
...continued from Newsletter

When I became pregnant with my daughter Mikayla, I was so excited when the doctor told me she was a girl. You see, she has three older brothers and to finally have a girl as my last child was just amazing. My pregnancy was completely normal. There were no indications that there was anything wrong with her. At 32 weeks I began feeling uncomfortable and felt like I needed to get checked out. I knew it was too early for labour so I got my friend to take me to the hospital to make sure everything was ok. She stayed at the hospital with me for the night because the doctor wanted to keep me hooked up to the monitors.



Tammy Richardson

At 7:30 in the morning, Mikayla's heartbeat began to slow drastically. She was in distress so the doctor decided she needed to be delivered by emergency cesarean section. My husband was not there and there was no time to wait. My friend came in the OR with me and Mikayla was born. I was very afraid because she was so early. Then the pediatrician that attended the delivery leaned over me and said "she has a birth defect". I was scared I didn't know what he meant. He held her over me and said "this is what it is". I saw her face and felt fear like I had never felt before. I think that the doctor gave me something or I just passed out because the next thing I knew my husband was at my bedside.



Mikayla and her Nana Debby

We went to see her together; she was so tiny. She was in an incubator and we couldn't hold her.



Mikayla at age 4

She was a fighter from the day she was born. She stayed in the incubator only 3 days. It was a real learning curve to figure out how to feed her. The first time that I did, she began choking and all of her alarms on her monitors went off. I didn't know what to do. The nurse took her from me and sat her up she stopped choking and then she calmed me down. I traveled back and forth to the hospital as much as possible to take care of her. On one of these trips, there was a hearing test that was sitting beside her which said she had failed. I asked the doctor if that meant she couldn't hear, and he said that yes that is what it means. I was so upset that I don't even know how I made it home. I was hysterical when I told my husband. I thought oh my God, is it not enough that she looks like that, she needs to be deaf too???? We went back to the hospital together and the nurse, the wonderful amazing nurse, told us that she was not deaf, and that babies born with a cleft lip and palate tend to fail the test because of the fluid in their ears. That was probably the best news that I had ever heard.



A week after she was born, we were sent to SickKids and met with the team of doctors that would be taking care of her for the next several years. We were given all kinds of information and resources for all of us. It was a very difficult situation to deal with. There was so much sadness, anger and the feeling of “why my baby”? Mikayla is now almost 12 years old, and she has had her fair share of teasing and bullying. She was very shy and did not like to do anything in front of anyone because she didn’t want people to stare at her, or point and laugh. When she was 10 years old she went to Camp Trailblazers with AboutFace and she has had a complete change in attitude. She is strong and outgoing. Spending time with other children that have gone through the same things that she is going through has made her feel like she is not alone. After her second time at Camp she was asked to speak at an event in front of a whole room of strangers, and tell her story. She did it with poise and grace and I have never been more proud of her. What does not kill us only makes us stronger. I would not change one minute of my time with Mikayla for anything, she is a true blessing.



Mikayla at Camp Trailblazers
2011 with friends