



Greta Great Heart

A MinneStory

Greta's life-threatening heart defect was identified through newborn screening shortly after she was born. Her parents, Steve and Karin, share their story and how this experience has shaped Greta.



Steve: So yeah, I think our journey started, and we call kind of an emotional roller-coaster from the excitement of gonna have our second child.

Karin: Yeah so, I felt that I had a really nice pregnancy. I felt good. Had some of the just kind of normal motherly things. I remember laying in bed and kind of having contractions at 4:30 and oh my gosh, is this actually it? I don't know. I don't want to be one of the ladies that goes in too early. And then at 5:30 it became clear. And no, I am having these like every 10 minutes or so. And I pushed like twice and I could like, and she like came out, and I'm like, Dr. Beard, get in here and catch my baby. And you know, we're just laughing. It's too perfect. I can't believe how lucky we are.

Steve: And one of that last things we had to do was this thing called newborn screening, which I have never heard of.

Karin: So then she failed that pulse oximetry screen and so that's when I first started feeling worried. I remembering kinda looking at you and us having eyes, "what the heck does that mean?"

Steve: I didn't really, personally didn't recognize what the test was for, what that meant. I think we're very optimistic people. Well, she'll fail, but we'll be home at 2:00 instead of 8:00 in the morning.

Karin: I think about, like how torturous, I think the waiting while she did the echocardiogram was. I can remember, you standing behind me with your hands on my shoulders. And just like searching her face to see, to try and get any sort of read on what was happening. You know, like, trying to look for positives or negatives, like what is she thinking, what is she seeing, why is she taking so long? And at that point realizing that so, I remember that she looked at us and said, "I'm so sorry, but this is definitely not normal."

Steve: So then we go from you jumped in the ambulance, I followed from behind. So then we lead up to meeting the surgeon. I remember thinking to ourselves, or talking to you, I hope this guys is one of the most cocky and arrogant person I know. And he wasn't, but I think he was 'cause just to be a peds heart surgeon, to work on a little infant heart, you need to have some confidence, and he definitely was that. So postsurgery, in my opinion was probably, one of the most, outside of the NICU, difficult times of that night.

Karin: Yeah, that was hard.

Steve: And in hind sight, we look back at the newborn screen in that she was detected early. If she wasn't, she probably would've got sick at 1-year-old, 2-years-old. Probably would've found it, more complicated surgery, she would've remembered. Would've been more painful for her. So now we fast-forward to she's a healthy 2.5-year-old, healthy as can be and there's no reason she can't run a marathon and be an Olympian when she gets older.

Karin: Yeah, we termed her Greta Great Heart in the hospital on the CaringBridge page. She healed so quickly, like she impressed all of the doctors. And so she'll kind of run her hand down her scar and say, "This is where the doctor fixed my heart. I had heart surgery. They open me here. They cut, they fixed my heart, and then they put me back. And I'm all better. I'm all better now." She's kind of amazing. She knows about that; she wants to see the pictures and stuff. She

tells the story, and kind of wants to hear the story. And then you know, her big sister Chelsey likes to hear the story of when they came with the balloons. So Steve came with balloons, and she made me a big card for my birthday. And so, they both are able to talk about it and reflect on it. I'm excited to be able to teach Greta even more about it, because I feel like she's going to be an awesome advocate.

Steve: And the number of times Chelsey and Greta ask for us to tell the stories of them in the hospital, it's every other day. So she likes to hear about it. She's proud of her scar. And again, it's made her who she is and what she's going to be.

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