

Spotlight

Yale
NewHaven
Health

Yale New Haven
Hospital

YOUR generosity put Reid on the long road to health

Born with a life-threatening heart defect

Thanks to you, Reid sleeps peacefully after open heart surgery six years ago. Watching over him is a special bear with a “zipper scar” that opens up to show a little mended heart.

Just 26 hours after giving birth by C-section, Saryn got up and walked out of the hospital near her home in Westport.

SHE WAS STILL WEAK from the surgery, but her newborn son, Reid, had been rushed to the NICU at YNHCH for emergency care. She had to be with him, and her husband, Kevin.

Saryn found Reid, tiny and fragile, hooked up to a ventilator to help him breathe. An MRI revealed a rare heart condition caused by a combination of four defects that could only be repaired with open heart surgery.

Saryn’s pregnancy had been healthy and uneventful. “I never expected anything like this,” she says. “My whole life turned upside down.”

Just like Olympic snowboarder Shaun White

The physicians, nurses, and caregivers at YNHCH were patient and kind — and they gave Saryn and Kevin the hope they needed to get through.

A pediatric critical care doctor who had heard about

(continued inside) 



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Reid's case came in to tell Saryn that she had been born with the very same condition — and she'd had a typical healthy childhood and was thriving as an adult and physician.

And "when they told me Shaun White (the famous Olympic gold medalist in snowboarding) also had the same condition, it gave me hope that Reid would be okay," Saryn says. "It would be a long road, but I felt so fortunate that we were at YNHCH with the best possible medical team and technology.

After four seemingly endless months of challenges with breathing, feeding, and sleeping, Reid hit the 11-pound mark — the minimum his doctors felt was necessary to withstand the surgery.

Of course Saryn and her husband Kevin were terrified. But they had complete confidence in Reid's medical team.

Reid's five-hour surgery went exactly as planned. "Afterward, in the recovery room, he looked angelic and healthy and perfect," Saryn says. "That's when I finally knew he would be completely fine."

"A true miracle" made possible by donors like you

And in less than a week, Reid was smiling, gaining weight, and growing. "Everything started falling into place," says Saryn. "It was a true miracle."

Six years later, Reid is in great health, with abso-



"We were so incredibly lucky to have Reid born in this tiny corner of the world, where the best medical care is available at YNHCH," says Reid's mom, Saryn.

lutely no restrictions on his activities. He excels at school and he's a great athlete.

"At the last parent-teacher meeting, his teacher told me that — just as important as sports and academics — Reid is unusually kind to his classmates," says Saryn. "My heart exploded with pride at that moment. I think all he went through made him the way he is."

Reid's health must be monitored for the rest of his life. So once a year or so, Saryn and Reid travel to YNHCH to see his cardiologist. Like the other members of the care team that saved Reid's life, his cardiologist has become like a family member.

Thank you, donors, for giving an amazing little boy like Reid a chance to have a wonderful life! ♥

Can YOU help save the life of a child like Reid?

Yes, you can! With a gift to the brand-new Campaign for the Yale New Haven Children's Hospital Heart Center

THANKS TO THE PAST GENEROSITY OF DONORS LIKE YOU, Reid (see cover story and pictured below) is running around, playing basketball, baking brownies, and having fun like any typical six-year-old.

But if he hadn't had access to one of the best pediatric cardiology departments in the region, his story could have turned out very differently.

Jeremy Asnes, MD — one of the physicians that helped save Reid's life six years ago — and Peter Gruber, MD, PhD, co-directors of the Children's Heart Center, are leading a groundbreaking expansion and

enhancement of the hospital's pediatric cardiac center.

And just like Wendy and Richard did with their amazing gift of the proceeds from Rob's beautiful sports car (see story on p. 4), YOU can help bring the newest treatments, innovative technology, and extraordinary care to babies and kids with heart disease at YNHCH.

With your donation of any size, you will help make it possible for more children, with the most complex heart conditions, to live full, wonderful lives — like Reid. ♥



✓ **YES!** I want to help cure children with complex heart conditions!

Visit GiveToYNHH.org/HCF to make a gift.

✓ **YES!** I would like to learn more about the campaign for the YNHCH Heart Center and how I can help.

Contact Valerie O'Brien at **203.680.5048** or email her at valerie.obrien@ynhh.org

Because of you, Ukraine received \$1 million in medical supplies

Donations like yours make it possible for Yale New Haven Health to respond to people all over the world in times of crisis and tragedy.

YNHHS recently sent a large amount of urgently needed personal protective gear, including surgical masks, gowns, gloves, and N95 masks to Ukraine. Our hope is to help protect those who are caring for countless injured and wounded family members and soldiers.

Thank you.

YOU helped make this possible — and we could not be more grateful.



A story of love, friendship, and a racy sports car

Just over 60 years ago, when he was only five, Rob Blum became the very first child to have open heart surgery at the Hospital of St. Raphael — now Yale New Haven Hospital St. Raphael Campus.



THE SURGERY SAVED HIS LIFE but his heart condition remained a health challenge, and tragically, he passed away in 2012 at age 57.

Rob never let his condition interfere with living an active, joyful life. “He was unique, funny, witty, and bright,” says his daughter Courtney. “He looked at life as a gift and enjoyed every moment like it was his last.”

If you were Rob’s friend, you considered yourself very lucky. “Rob had a way of making every person feel like they were the most important person in the world,” says his son, Eric.

“When Rob died,” his wife Wendy recalls, “we had a celebration of life. Seven or eight friends got up to speak, and they all said that Rob was their best friend!”

One friendship really stood out, however. That was Rob’s friendship with Richard (Richard asked that we use only his first name, in order for the story to remain focused on Rob).

“We met Rob and Wendy in Aruba in the early ’90s,” says Richard. “And soon our vacation friends became our forever friends. We understood each other, we toured the world together, and we laughed and laughed.”

When Rob retired, he treated himself to the one thing he’d always dreamed of owning — a mint, 2007 silver Saturn Sky Turbo Redline sports car. Richard was thrilled for him. “That car was Rob’s pride and joy,” says Richard. “It was wonderful.”

After Rob passed away, Wendy asked Richard if he’d like to have the Sky. Richard didn’t hesitate for a second. “I took special care of it in honor of my friend,

Rob,” Richard says. “And every time I got in the car, I felt I was talking with him.”

Paying it forward

Not long ago, when Richard regretfully decided to sell the Sky, he wanted to find a way to use the proceeds to honor his friend. He sought Wendy’s advice.

“Richard told me that he wanted to pay it forward — for Rob as well as all the people in his own life who helped him along the way,” says Wendy. “I gave it some thought ... and suddenly I knew. It should go to help a child in the hospital with heart disease — a child like Rob.”

Yale New Haven Children’s Hospital (YNHCH) had just launched a campaign to expand and enhance its pediatric heart center (see p. 3), so the timing was perfect.

Richard was delighted with the idea. “We made this choice to honor Rob,” he says. “It’s to help give young people with heart issues the advantage of being treated at a great facility like YNHCH.”

It’s a beautiful act of generosity, yet Richard insists the story is about Rob, not him. “You can remember someone, you can miss him,” he says. “But to honor him with something tangible is even more important.”♥

