



Kasey Andrews is a happy, playful toddler despite being born with a heart murmur two years ago at Mercy Medical Center. At age 4 months, she was diagnosed with a ventricular septal defect (hole in her heart) and congestive heart failure.

NOW! look at me

Born at Mercy Medical Center just before Christmas 2005, Kasey Andrews appeared to be a happy, healthy, 9-pound baby.

Shortly after Kasey's birth, however, a heart murmur was detected.

Kasey's parents, Mark and Royale, were advised by Dr. Roger Allen, a neonatologist at Mercy's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, that the murmurs sometimes go away over time. He added that she would require continued monitoring in the months to come. At that time, Royale was a Catheterization Lab nurse at Mercy Medical Center.

At 4 months, Kasey had gained only 3 pounds, was having trouble breathing and tired easily. Cedar Rapids

Pediatric cardiologist Mark M. Zittergruen, MD, diagnosed her with a ventricular septal defect (hole in her heart) and congestive heart failure. She was placed on a high-calorie diet for weight gain and a diuretic to improve her breathing.

Two months later, the hole in her heart still had not closed and, despite her parents' efforts, she still was not gaining adequate weight. Open-heart surgery was scheduled at the University of Iowa. The surgery repaired the dime-sized hole, as well as an atrial defect discovered during the operation. Today, she is a happy, healthy 2-year-old in Des Moines, where her family moved last year.

"She is thriving and very active," notes her mother, Royale. "The only sign of her ordeal is the scar that runs down the middle of her chest. We take heart knowing she is very strong now."

Dr. Zittergruen adds, "Kasey had an excellent surgical repair of her significant heart defects. I anticipate that she will have normal growth and development. Her activity level should be very good and she should not require any restrictions as the years go by."

