

# BETHANY SEES FOUR!

*In August 2006, Barbara Maatouk gave birth to quads who were born 14 weeks prematurely. They recently celebrated their 2nd birthday and now attend day care 3 days a week. Here, Barbara tells us some of her story and how they all have managed, with a little bit of help from Mater Dei's early intervention team, Bethany.*

At 7 weeks I had an ultrasound; the technician showed me 4 black circles on the screen and said each one was a baby. I cried with shock and dismay at how I would cope. Peter's (my husband) main concern was that we would need a new car!

I was sick throughout the pregnancy, constantly vomiting and I actually lost weight. I had been warned I would go early. At 24 weeks I was hospitalised for dehydration and ended up having my babies by emergency C section at 26 weeks gestation. At delivery each child had a doctor, a doctor helper and 4 nurses. They were so small and not breathing. All needed to be resuscitated.

First to arrive was George weighing 818 grams, named after his grandfather. Natalie second born weighed 840 grams. Raymond was third born, weighing 580 grams (less than a dozen eggs.) Rebecca was last born, weighing 615 grams. She is named after a saint and was the only one of my babies that I saw immediately after her birth.

I cried when I saw each of my babies on their second day. All the babies were on ventilators, with tubes in their little arms and noses. They were so small and you could see their veins through their almost transparent skin. One of the scariest moments was when Natalie stopped breathing, and the hospital staff asked me to leave. She was



*Rebecca, Natalie, George and Raymond six months old.*

purple and I could see the nurse pumping her chest with one finger to get her heart going.

Peter and I had a meeting with the doctors and a counsellor soon after we saw our babies. We were told not to expect to bring all of them home, maybe 3, probably only 2. Raymond was the smallest and sickest and needed an immediate blood transfusion and Natalie had heart problems.

I stayed in hospital a week after the birth and my babies stayed 3 months. I visited them three times a day and Peter came with me every day after work. During this time I wrote a diary to record the events and experience.

We were finally able to touch them after a few weeks. We had to constantly wash our hands and wear gowns and masks as the hygiene standards were very high. After about 12 weeks we were allowed to bring Rebecca home. A week later Natalie, then George and lastly Raymond.

With government assistance no longer available for multiple births, my life became a cycle of changing, feeding, washing and bathing. I had made a friend while in hospital and she came weekly, with her parents, to help me with the babies. My parents came and cleaned the house and with the help of good friends and at times a nanny we managed.

The quads were followed up by Rainbow Clinic, (neonatal clinic attached to Liverpool Hospital) for six months who recommended that the quads would benefit from the services of the Bethany early intervention team at Mater Dei.

The children have made amazing progress since we started having weekly visits with the Bethany team. Cathy (the physiotherapist) gave us therapy and support to get the children moving. Pam (the

speech pathologist) assisted us with feeding and language issues. Lyn (the occupational therapist) and Karen, Kerri, Vida (the early learning teaching team) came and encouraged the children's development with fun activities, stories and music. Their progress has been fantastic; George was the last to crawl but the first to walk.

Just after the quads first birthday I felt unwell and did a pregnancy test. It showed positive!! I thought the test was out of date so it must be wrong, NO!! Three pregnancy tests and 9 months later we had Rachel. I expected her to look like the quads but, no, she was a healthy full term baby.

We needed the quads to have contact with other children so they have just started day care and their development is now much the same but a little slower than other toddlers.

This also gave me some much needed time to spend with Rachel. The quads really enjoy day care; they come home exhausted and are ready for an early night.

We still receive services from Bethany but not as frequently. Karen and Kerri will go out to the day care centre and give them any assistance needed. We are grateful for the care, dedication and commitment of the Bethany early intervention team. Peter and I don't feel the quads would have progressed so far in such a short time without their assistance and guidance.

A final note; our family is complete, 5 children under 22 months is enough!

**Barbara Maatouk**



*George ten months old, with Cathy, completing physio exercises.*



*The quads doing physio exercises.*