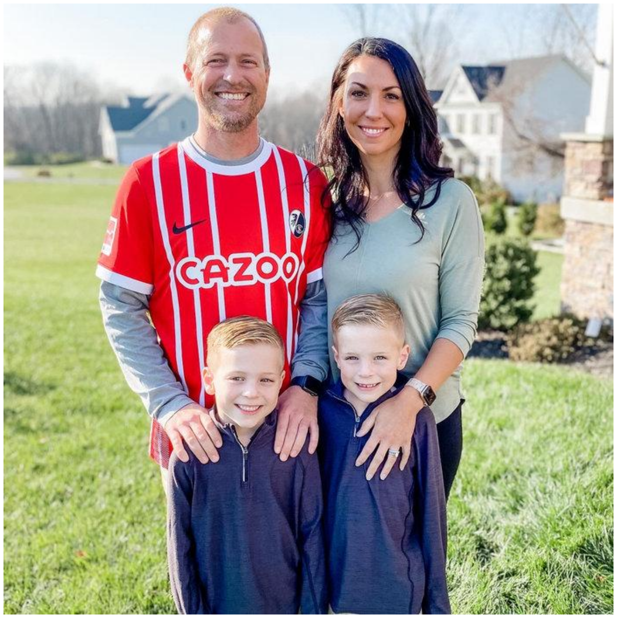
HEARTSTRINGS
Connecting CHD supporters

JULY 2025



Dear Friends of KHT,

Summer is in full swing, and we're still riding high from all the incredible events that kicked it off! A huge THANK YOU to every sponsor, donor, golfer, and volunteer who helped make this year's Green Hearts Open Charity Golf Tournament such a memorable and impactful day. Your generosity and energy brought the sunshine, and we are so grateful for your support in helping Heart Families everywhere.

We're also sending our heartfelt appreciation to everyone who attended and donated during our Hearts for Hope Family Happy Hour + Cornhole Tournament. Despite the wild weather, the event was an amazing success, and we owe a huge thank you to Twain's Tavern for hosting us and staying flexible, and to Maryland Cornhole Organization for organizing a fantastic indoor tournament — congrats again to our first and second place winners who took home not just bragging rights, but also some cash!

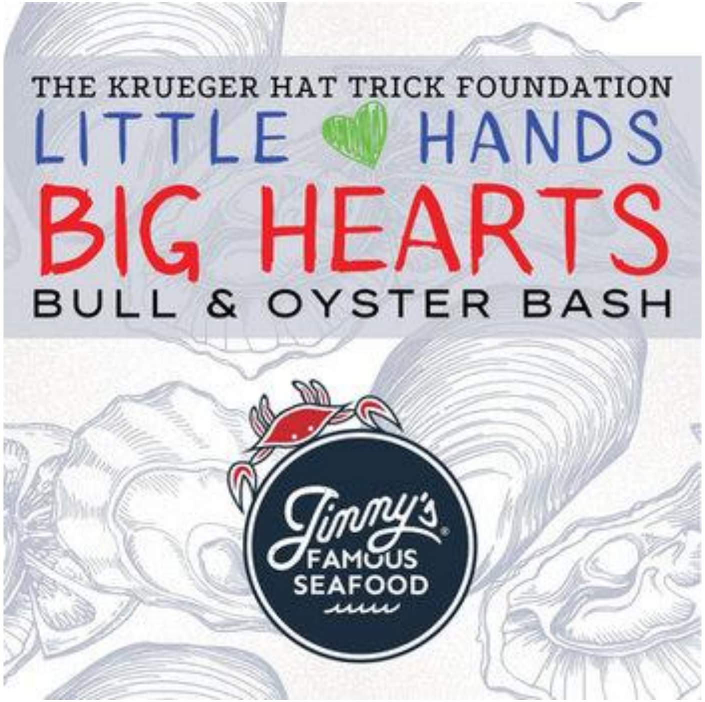
To everyone who has donated or requested a KHT Heart Hero Bag — thank you! We're working hard to get these bags into the hands of families who need them, and appreciate your patience as we restock due to high demand. These bags are filled with comfort, love, and encouragement for Heart Warriors and their caregivers. You can learn more or donate a bag at https://www.thekht.org/comfortkits.

And finally, mark your calendars! Our fall signature event, the Little Hands Big Hearts Bull & Oyster Bash, is set for October — exact date coming soon. Be on the lookout for more info via email and follow us on social media for updates. We can't wait to celebrate with you again this fall!

Wishing you all a safe, joyful, and sunshine-filled summer. Thank you for continuing to stand beside our Heart Warriors and their families.

With heartfelt gratitude,
Katelin Krueger

Upcoming Events

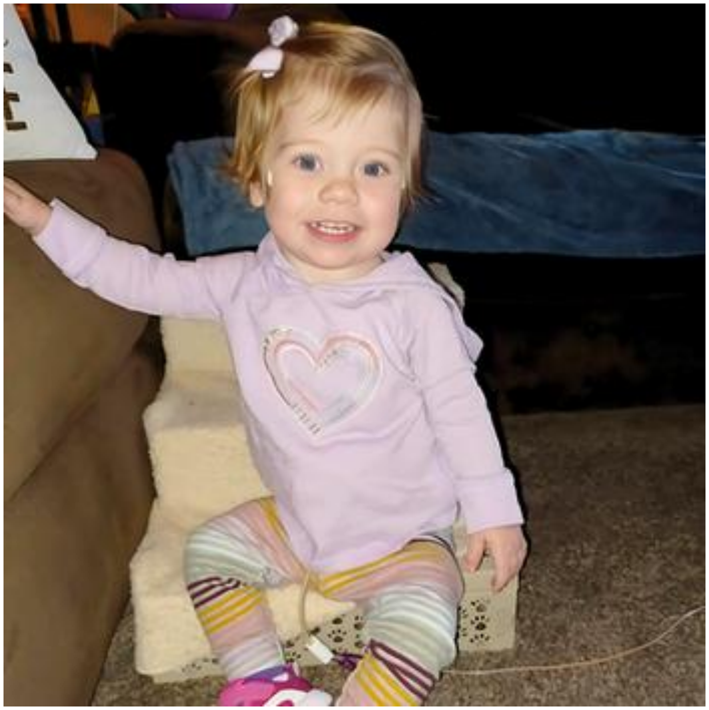


LITTLE HANDS BIG HEARTS Bull & Oyster Bash

Time: TBD

Jimmy's Famous Seafood | Baltimore, MD

Heart Warrior Of the Month



Meet Abigail

Abigail was born at 36 weeks, a tiny, beautiful surprise with no signs of the challenges ahead. At just two weeks old, her pediatrician heard a heart murmur that led to a cardiology visit—and a life-changing diagnosis. Abigail had several complex congenital heart defects, including multiple VSDs, an ASD, DORV, a left PSA, and dangerous arrhythmias. By four months old, she had already endured two major heart surgeries, including a 10-hour procedure where doctors discovered even more complications. Over the course of 10 months, Abigail spent 81 days in the PICU, fighting through every obstacle with incredible strength. Along the way, her medical team discovered she was born without a pancreas or gallbladder—yet she continues to grow, smile, and amaze everyone who meets her. Now two and a half years old, Abigail is truly a CHD warrior and a shining example of resilience. Her journey is far from over, but her heart—and her spirit—are stronger than ever.

Share Your Heart Warrior Story

She Touched My Heart

Reprinted from Adult Congenital Heart Association

Dr. Helen Taussig, my cardiologist when I was a baby in Baltimore with a congenital heart condition, did not use a stethoscope to listen to my heart. After a childhood ear infection led to permanent hearing loss, Dr. Taussig used her fingers to feel the irregular rhythm of my defective heart that enabled her to diagnose my pulmonary stenosis.

By 1952, when I was three years old and could no longer walk and function normally, with a prognosis that I would not live much longer, Dr. Taussig convinced her Johns Hopkins colleague Alfred Blalock, the world-famous cardiac surgeon, to perform open heart surgery to repair my pulmonary valve. Dr. Taussig was in the operating room on April 5, 1952, with Dr. Blalock and his long-time assistant Vivien Thomas, who were the three people who saved my life that day.

Helen Brooke Taussig was born on May 24, 1898, in Cambridge, MA. The youngest of four children raised in an academic family – her father was a professor at Harvard University and her mother was one of the first students at Radcliffe College – Helen struggled with numerous childhood ailments, including severe dyslexia. Yet she worked hard at her studies and eventually graduated in 1921 from the University of California, Berkeley as a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

Helen returned to Massachusetts and wanted to study at Harvard Medical School, only to learn that women were not accepted as degree candidates into the medical program (this did not change until 1945, seven years before my surgery). Instead, she studied anatomy at Boston University and then transferred to The Johns Hopkins University, where she received a medical degree in 1927.

Fortunately for me, Dr. Taussig decided to stay in Baltimore, and became one of the first physicians to specialize in pediatric cardiology. Several years later, Dr. Taussig became chief of the pediatric department at Johns Hopkins and became famous for studying the “blue baby” condition – named for the bluish tinge in a baby’s lips, fingertips and toes because of insufficient blood flow between the heart and the lungs. Working with Dr. Blalock and Vivien Thomas, she helped developed the surgical procedure that became known as the Blalock-Thomas-Taussig shunt.

This procedure was first performed in 1945 on children with pulmonary stenosis, the same condition I presented to her in 1952. Since then, tens of thousands of children around the world have been saved by this operation. In addition to her clinical work, Dr. Taussig went on to become a professor at The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, only the second woman to achieve full professor status at the University.

Dr. Taussig retired from John Hopkins in 1963 but continued her work, writing more than 140 papers in her career, some co-authored with Dr. Blalock. She received dozens of honorary degrees and awards, including becoming a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Cardiology, and induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom. One year later, she became the first woman to be elected president of the American Heart Association.

Sadly, Dr. Taussig died in a freak car accident in a shopping mall parking lot on May 20, 1986, four days short of her 88th birthday. She donated her body to Johns Hopkins. In 2005, The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine dedicated the Helen B. Taussig Congenital Heart Disease Center in her honor.

In 1973, some 21 years after my surgery and purely by chance, I saw Dr. Taussig interviewed on a local Baltimore television program. I immediately wrote her a letter, and a few days later I received a handwritten response that began, "My dear William." She went on to say that receiving my letter "means more to me than anything else. You truly warmed my heart."

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DID YOU KNOW

1 OUT OF EVERY 120 BABIES IN THE UNITED STATES IS BORN WITH A HEART DISEASE.

WHAT DOES KHT DO?

- Hospital Comfort Kits
- Family Financial Aid
- Hospital Wish List Donations
- UMMS Children's Hospital Children's Heart Program
- CHD Week Goodies
- Funding Beads of Courage
- And more!

Learn More

From Heart Warrior to Heart Advocate: Why I Wear the Crown for Children Like My Son

Reprinted from Children’s Heart Foundation

My story begins not with a title or a crown—but with a scar.

I was born with a congenital heart defect (CHD), a condition I would only come to fully understand as I got older. As a child, I underwent open-heart surgery, an experience that not only saved my life but quietly shaped my purpose. At the time, I didn’t know that I was a “heart warrior”—a term used to describe those who live with and fight CHD. I only knew that my heart was different, and that I was lucky to be here.

Years later, my understanding of CHD deepened in a way I never could have anticipated—when I became a mother. When our son Alexander was born, James and I were overjoyed. He was our perfect, curious, bright-eyed baby boy. At my twenty week appointment, our world turned upside down when doctors discovered he, too, had a congenital heart defect. Hearing the same diagnosis I had once received—only now as a parent—was both devastating and surreal.

Watching your child go through what you once survived is a pain that's hard to describe. There were wires, hospital walls, sleepless nights, and endless prayers. But there was also strength, science, and support. Today, Alexander is thriving—a vibrant, music-loving little boy who dances like no one is watching and lights up every room he enters. He is my heart warrior, just like his mama.

That journey—from patient to parent—is what fuels my platform as Mrs. DC America 2025. I proudly represent our nation's capital not just with a sash, but with a mission: to raise awareness and critical funding for CHD research through The Children's Heart Foundation. CHDs are the most common birth defect in the U.S., yet they are severely underfunded compared to other childhood conditions.

This isn't just a cause for me—it's my calling. As Mrs. DC America, I am using every opportunity to educate families, amplify the voices of CHD warriors and their caregivers, and raise funds that will drive research forward. I chair the Washington DC Congenital Heart Walk, and I'm committed to making sure no family ever feels alone on this journey. The pageant world often celebrates beauty and grace, but for me, it's about using this platform for advocacy, resilience, and impact. Behind the gown is a mother who has sat beside an ICU bed. Behind the crown is a survivor who believes in the power of community and research to save lives.

I carry the title proudly, but more than that—I carry the stories of every child and parent touched by CHD. I carry Alexander. I carry myself as a little girl, unsure of what the future would hold. And I carry the hope that one day, no parent will have to fear a diagnosis like ours. Thank you for joining me on this journey. Let's fight for every heartbeat—together.

Kernika and Savera's CHD Story

Reprinted from American Heart Association CHD Personal Stories

Kernika Gupta comes from a family of physicians. Her mother, siblings, aunts, uncles and many cousins all work in health care.

So when her daughter Savera Patel was born two years ago with a heart condition – four years after her first daughter Veera was born perfectly healthy – Gupta's resources were as close as a phone call away. Even still, nothing takes away the reality of having a baby with a congenital heart defect.

"I vividly remember the moment they told me," said Gupta, who lives in Philadelphia. "My heart dropped. They said she has a bicuspid aortic valve. When I'd been thinking about going to medical school, I had spent time with my uncle, a pediatric cardiologist, and I saw kids who had that."

Later, her uncle told Gupta that when he heard about Savera's diagnosis, "It felt like the earth had dropped from below him."

Her pregnancy had been normal, and because of the way Savera was positioned in Gupta's uterus, the defect wasn't spotted until she was born. Her condition, which is more common in older adults than in babies, occurs when the aortic valve doesn't form properly, resulting in restricted blood flow from the left ventricle to the aorta. It also sometimes affects pressure in the left atrium of the heart, which can cause further damage to the heart.

Gupta also has a heart issue — patent foramen ovale, a type of hole in the heart that eventually closes on its own. An estimated 25% of the U.S. population has it, and Gupta didn't even know she did until she suffered a small stroke at age 21. She sees a cardiologist routinely; otherwise, she's healthy.

She thinks about her daughter's issue much more. "She wasn't gaining weight for a while and we were in constant contact with the pediatrician," Gupta said. "If babies don't grow, that could indicate something going on with the heart. Even now, if she has an off day with eating, I'll panic. Whenever we go to the doctor, I'm holding my breath that she's gained weight."

Additionally, any sort of bacterial infection – like cellulitis of the eye, which Savera had last summer – can go through the bloodstream and affect her heart. “It takes her a little longer to recover from things,” Gupta said. “In the back of my head, I’m waiting for that other shoe to drop.” Savera’s condition is lifelong, and the first year was especially harrowing.

“She had a couple of instances where her lower legs and feet started to turn blue,” Gupta said. “It was at night, and I called my uncle, who walked me through everything. The next day, she was fine.”

Not until Savera turned a year old did Gupta feel like she could take a breath. And when she did, she began thinking of the times she could call on her uncle, her siblings, her mother — she’s blessed, she said, to have those resources at her fingertips and wants to make that more attainable for others dealing with medical conditions. For her, there is nothing more critical than a trusted support network.

“That’s my why; it’s why I want to give back,” she said. She and her husband Vishal Patel spent months deciding how they could best help parents going through circumstances like theirs. Through the American Heart Association, they decided on a gift that funds an initiative focused on delivering heart-related supplies for new moms and infants living in underserved areas of Philadelphia. Included are blood pressure cuffs as well as infant CPR kits and educational materials about heart health.

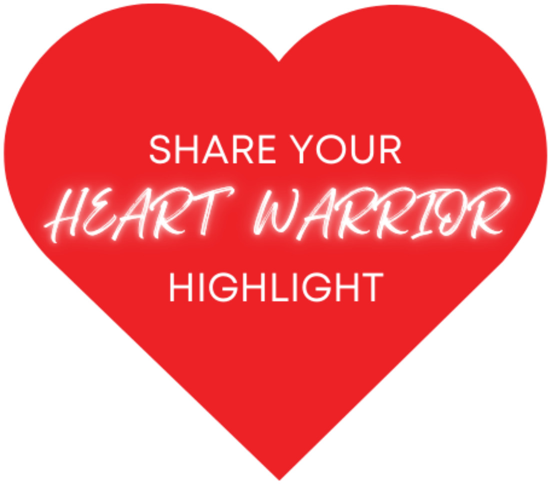
“We’re partnering with community organizations that have doula networks, and working alongside them to deploy these kits,” she said. “Doing so will increase the likelihood of being able to educate new moms about hypertension and other illnesses that relate to your heart. At such a vulnerable and often overwhelming point in your life, it makes the world of a difference to have a trusted individual by your side. We can’t have healthy babies without healthy mothers.”

As tough as Savera’s diagnosis has been, Gupta has found blessings in all her family has been through as well. “This opened me up to the reality of how complicated and exhausting health care can be,” she said.

“I’m such a planner, so Type A,” Gupta said. “Everything was so overscheduled and the first year of her life was centered around doctor appointments. It was all about making sure she was gaining weight and staying healthy, so much so that I didn’t let myself enjoy her."

Yes, she still worries; going with the flow isn't easy for her. But Savera is doing well, and Gupta shows her gratitude by reaching out. "People need help navigating this complicated system and having emotional support while doing it," she said. "I am grateful I can channel all this to make a change somewhere."

Heart Families



Want your Heart Warrior's courage to be featured by KHT? Email us your story. By sharing, you're raising CHD awareness and giving hope to other Heart Families.

Share Heart Warrior Highlight

If you've navigated life with a CHD, your advice could be a lifeline to others. Share your helpful tips to support the Heart Family community.

Share Helpful Advice

CHD Resources

General CHD Support

- Kids Health
- My Heart Visit- Peer Support
- Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Sibling Support

- Sibling Support Project
- Comfort Zone Camp

Family Support

- Medicine Assistance Tool
- CDC

View More Resources

Become A Sponsor & Make A Difference!

Corporate sponsorships are underway for 2025! Partner with us to enjoy year-round recognition while helping us meet our goals and create meaningful change.

Your support directly impacts the lives of heart warriors and their families. Join us as a sponsor today and make a lasting difference!

THE KRUEGER HAT TRICK FOUNDATION

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

**To be included in Hearts for Hope & Green Hearts Open, sponsorship must be purchased by May*

	MIRACLE MAKERS DIAMOND $15,000	HEALING HEARTS PLATINUM $10,000	HEART HEROES GOLD $7,000	LITTLE ANGELS SILVER $4,000	LITTLE WARRIOR SUPPORTERS $1,500
BRAND EXPOSURE					
Name on KHT Heartstrings Newsletter	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥	♥
Featured social media posts for one rolling year	♥ 12	♥ 12	♥ 6	♥ 4	♥ 3
Name placement on official event website	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥	♥
Gratitude posts on event-related social media platforms	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
Opportunity to provide items in welcome gifts and/or auction items	♥	♥			
Opportunity to set up info booth	♥				
EVENT RECOGNITION					
Name featured in promotional materials & event signage	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥	♥
Name in electronic programs	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥ LOGO	♥	♥
Verbal recognition during events	♥	♥			
VIP ACCESS & EVENT TICKETS					
Hearts for Hope Family Happy Hour + Cornhole Tournament Sunday in June	♥ 10 tickets	♥ 8 tickets	♥ 6 tickets	♥ 4 tickets	
Green Hearts Open Charity Golf Tournament Monday in June	♥ 2 foursomes	♥ 2 foursomes	♥ 1 foursome	♥ 1 foursome	
Entry into Fairway Fortune: 50/50 Raffle for Tiny Champions Drawing at Golf Tournament	♥ x3	♥ x2	♥	♥	♥
Little Hearts Big Hopes Bull & Oyster Bash Saturday in September	♥ 2 tables	♥ 2 tables	♥ 1 table	♥ 1 table	
Santa Brunch Weekend in December	♥ 10 tickets	♥ 8 tickets	♥ 6 tickets	♥ 4 tickets	

Thank you for your generosity and support!

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