

# PULSE NEWSLETTER

## I am McNeely glad we met!

by Ben Maycock

In May, Emerson Robichaud-King arrived at her IWK appointment wearing a very special piece of clothing. Across her t-shirt, written in blue and red, were the words 'I am McNeely glad we met!'

Emerson started out life as the happiest baby. She was eating like a champ, rolling over with ease and achieving her developmental milestones as expected. But at 11 months of age things changed dramatically. Emerson developed infantile spasms, an epileptic syndrome often seen within the first year of life.

"We lost the baby we once knew," says Emerson's mom Erin Robichaud. "Emerson was constantly seizing."



Emerson was diagnosed with medically refractory epilepsy, a condition that could not be controlled by medication, drastically affecting her ability to function and her ability to develop normally.

“Emerson had very little quality of life, she was never happy,” says Erin. “She never made eye contact, never smiled, never interacted with any of her family, with her two sisters. Her brain always had irregular activity so we were never sure she was experiencing anything. She was merely existing.”

“We were close to two years on medications trying to control the seizures and nothing was working.”

At their wit’s end, Erin and her husband Dale King met IWK neurosurgeon Dr. Daniel McNeely. It was then that they discussed the possibility of surgery to control Emerson’s seizures.

“The surgery was performed in February and the results have been extraordinary,” says neurosurgery nurse Marie MacNeil. “It has changed her quality of life immensely.”

“A soon as she opened her eyes in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) she was reaching for me,” says Erin. “She started really looking at us. It was as if it was the first time she had ever seen us.”

“It has really changed our whole family’s life. And I think it exceeded even Dr. McNeely’s expectations.”

Now three years, old Emerson is learning those development skills once more. And can now sit and play with her siblings.

“I can’t say enough about Dr. McNeely,” says Erin. “When we first met him he was so positive and calm I put my trust in him wholeheartedly. He is a phenomenal person. Just the fact that he can go into surgery for ten hours and come out and meet with you and still be the same composed, compassionate person that went in is remarkable.”

