



## **The Kirby Family – Shandi, Jasper and Sweet Amberle**

**From: Calhoun, GA**

**Have stayed at RMHC for over 7 months!**

When Shandi had her first child, doctors explained that her body treats an embryo like it's a foreign object, where it tries to kick it out. The baby has to be "strong willed enough" while her body fights the pregnancy the whole time. Shandi had a successful, though premature birth, 13 years ago with her first child, she lost a baby a few years ago. Despite the odds, Shandi and Jasper pursued this pregnancy with optimism.

At Shandi's last appointment certain precautions were taken in order to help extend the pregnancy. On October 3, 2019, Shandi went into premature labor because of her high blood pressure and preeclampsia. Although Amberle was born that day at 25 weeks and weighing 1lb. 2oz., it was obvious she was a fighter.

On October 6, Shandi and Jasper check into the Chattanooga Ronald McDonald House. Since Shandi had been at the House before when she had her son almost 13 years ago, she felt at peace but helped Jasper transition.

“It’s just a good place to be when you have to be so far away from home,” shared Shandi. “You don’t have to worry about ‘oh, it’s an emergency how long is it going to take’, because we live an hour away and an hour is hundreds of miles in an emergency.”

Though sweet Amberle didn’t have to have surgeries, she has been classified as having Chronic Lung Disease because of her premature lungs. One of the most defining statements shared by Jasper and Shandi was how “Amberle is the boss and when she is ready, that’s the time”. This tiny little thing started out so frail and fragile on a feeding tube and has since overcome that challenge. She is learning to breath on her own and now has a trache. Her parents have been there for her every step of the way.

We asked Shandi and Jasper what it’s been like to be so close to their daughter throughout this.

**Here are the special “first time” moments they wanted you to know about:**

- “When I got to hold her for the very first time, she was so tiny, she wasn’t even 2 lbs yet.”
- “Every small change [in the NICU] is a HUGE change. It’s like a life goal they have accomplished, and it makes me so happy all the time.” Every time I get to do something a little more it’s like it brings me happiness for days on end.
- When they discovered Amberle had a dimple on her chin just like her mama after her feeding tube and the tape on her chin were removed!
- “When she opened her eyes for the first time, giving her a bath for the first time or putting clothes on her.”



For Shandi and Jasper, being close and being able to be involved with each little moment with Amberle is a “one-step closer mindset”.

When Shandi and Jasper shared their story, they were excited for Amberle to have more medical equipment removed so they could tell who their daughter looked more like. As of right now, Shandi and Jasper have stayed at RMHC of Greater Chattanooga for over 7 months. Little Amberle continues to grow surprise her parents and the NICU staff with her sass!

Without the amazing community that helps support RMHC of Greater Chattanooga, sweet Amberle’s parents would have missed some of these special moments captured forever!