



A HOMECOMING OF HOPE: NICU FAMILIES REUNITE TO CELEBRATE NEW BEGINNINGS - February 24, 2026

Our neonatal care team welcomed babies and their families to a very special gathering, allowing parents to not only show their gratitude, but to show off just how far their little ones have come.

A reunion of NICU families illustrated what happens when kindness, compassion and medical expertise intertwine. More than 200 NICU graduates, parents, family members,

clinicians and supporters gathered for a homecoming last month, celebrating each child's resilience and their amazing journeys that began in the NICU. Families who once sat at the bedside of their babies – our most fragile patients – came together to share stories, reconnect with care teams and celebrate one another's milestones.

Among those in attendance was the Jones family and their now three-year-old son Kyle Jr., who they also call Auggie. His mom, Fonda, spoke at the reunion and shared her experience after her little boy was born three months early, weighing only 1 pound, 6 ounces. The hospital where he was born had done everything they were equipped to do, but Kyle Jr. needed more care than they could provide.

"We met with a doctor we trusted and asked, 'If it was your baby, what would you do?'" Fonda remembered. "He explained about different levels of NICUs. He explained that at a level 4 NICU we would have cardiologists, pulmonologists and all the specialists and machinery we would need to help our baby. He mentioned the CHoR NICU was level 4. Our next question was 'How do we get him transferred?'"

Moving to a level 4 NICU: "It wasn't just a transfer of care for us, it was a transfer of trust."

When he was just 3 months old, Kyle Jr. was transferred to CHoR and Fonda remembers that day very well. At the reunion she spoke directly to the NICU providers in attendance about how comforting they were from the moment Kyle Jr. was admitted.

"We arrived here scared, exhausted, still learning how to be parents while in a hospital," recalled Fonda. "From the moment we got here, you all took him and us into your hands. We learned so much about our baby and how we could help and support him here. The journey was nothing less than amazing."

She said knowing an entire team of experts was there to take care of their baby changed everything.

"For me, there was a weight lifted because there would be more people involved in my son's care," Fonda explained. "There were more people to ask questions and help us turn fear into understanding, more people to make recommendations, more people to do research and more people to catch things someone else may have missed. The medical team was so engaged, and I will never ever forget them."

Kyle Jr. spent more than a year in the hospital and his parents are in awe of his progress and the milestones he has reached.

"There were days full of hope and days when fear sat so heavy on our chests that breathing felt hard," shared Fonda. "Our son's journey was so unique and powerful, we are so proud of everything he has and will continue to accomplish."

His care team is just as proud.

"NICU reunions are powerful because they close the circle—families whose journey began with uncertainty and many challenges return to celebrate milestones and possibility," says NICU nurse manager Molly Biringer. "They remind us that while machines and medicine are crucial, a family's presence and the love that is provided is what truly helps our tiniest patients thrive."

