

When Kyle Jones, Jr. entered the world in 2022, nothing about his arrival went according to plan. Born nearly three months early at a local hospital, he weighed just 1 pound, 6 ounces and measured only 11 inches long—small enough to rest in the palm of his father’s hand. His lungs were severely underdeveloped, and within moments, his parents, Fonda and Kyle Sr., were thrust into a reality they had never imagined: life in the neonatal intensive care unit.

There was no time to prepare. One day they were expecting a baby; the next, they were learning the language of ventilators and monitors. Baby Kyle Jr., soon known as “Auggie,” was tiny and fragile, yet determined from the start.

A crossroads

Weeks in the NICU turned into months, and despite the care team’s dedicated efforts, progress stalled. Then a physician gently explained that there was nothing more their hospital could do. “That conversation knocked the wind out of me,” Fonda recalled.

Kyle Sr. recognized they were at a crossroads. The family met with a doctor they trusted and asked one question, “If this were your baby, what would you do?” The answer changed everything. The physician explained what a Level 4 NICU could offer: advanced technology, specialized physicians and the ability to manage the most complex cases. One name stood out—Children’s Hospital of Richmond at VCU.

After three long months, Kyle Jr. was transferred to CHoR. “It wasn’t just a transfer of care,” his parents said. “It was a transfer of trust.”

Surrounded by care

The family arrived exhausted and frightened. Immediately, they felt supported by the depth of our team. Morning rounds were a revelation. Where once there had been just a few clinicians, now there was a hallway filled with specialists. “People would ask if we were intimidated,” Fonda said. “My immediate answer was no. There was a weight lifted.”

More people involved meant more questions answered, more perspectives considered and greater confidence in every decision.

A pivotal decision

Three months into Kyle Jr.’s care at CHoR, the team introduced another difficult conversation: replacing the intubations that limited his movement with a tracheostomy for respiratory assistance and a gastrostomy tube for long-term nutritional support. The decision was daunting, carrying the weight of major surgery

and the reality of ongoing support.

But the team’s patient, transparent approach made the difference. Physicians and specialists met with the family to walk through risks and benefits, even connecting them with another family who had faced the same decision. With clarity and confidence, they decided to move forward.

The decision changed everything. With the trach in place, Kyle Jr. began physical and occupational therapy—learning to sit up, roll over and play with toys. These milestones represented enormous progress and confirmed the family’s belief they had made the right choice.

Over time, the family learned the rhythm of the NICU. “We learned when a beep was just a beep and when a beep was a problem,” Fonda said. “We learned to celebrate victories most parents never think twice about.”

A life defined by possibility

Kyle Jr. spent 385 days in the hospital—more than a full year marked by milestones that arrived slowly and moments when his life hung in a terrifying balance. Yet he grew

stronger and was ultimately able to go home with a trach, a g-tube and oxygen.

“The NICU changed us forever,” Fonda said. “It taught us patience, gratitude for the smallest victories and that strength doesn’t always roar. Sometimes it shows up quietly—day to day, hour to hour, second to second.”

Today, Kyle Jr. is a thriving 3-year-old—active, engaged and enjoying many of the everyday experiences once thought out of reach. While he still requires oxygen at times, it is periodic and manageable, a small part of a life now defined by possibility. CHoR remains an important partner through regular visits to the complex care clinic, providing the same compassionate, integrated care the family experienced in the NICU.

Now measuring progress in laughter, movement and independence, Fonda and Kyle Sr. are continually amazed at how far their son has come—and grateful for the expert care, trusted partnership and steady hope that make his future possible.

To support the NICU and neonatology care, contact Brenna Monk at bmonk@chfrichmond.org.

From two grateful parents

To the doctors and the nurse practitioner team, thank you for your expertise, your honesty, your guidance and your refusal to give up. Thank you for taking so much time to answer all of our thousands of questions and ensuring that we knew where we were and what we were facing on a daily basis.

To the nurses, you are the heart of this NICU. Thank you for loving our son and taking great care of him. For celebrating every milestone with us and for holding us up on the days when we could not stand.

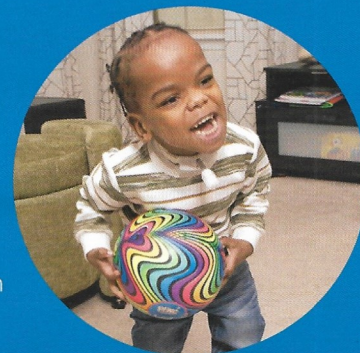
To the speech therapists, occupational therapists, nutritionists, thank you for seeing possibility before we could see progress.

To the respiratory therapists, thank you for giving our son breath. For performing emergency trach changes when he needed them and for teaching us how to trust machines that once terrified us.

And to the voices on the other end of the phone. The people who answered every single night when we would call to ask, “Is Auggie having a good night,” thank you for understanding that sometimes a parent just needs reassurance so they can sleep.

Thanks to all of you, our son didn’t just survive, he grew. He continues to inspire us every single day.

— Fonda and Kyle Jones, Sr.



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