

The short story of JoLeanna: 'Half of our heart lives in Heaven'

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Savannah and Adam met in 2011 through a mutual friend. They decided to start dating in 2014 and carried on a relationship throughout.

Finding out Savannah was pregnant was scary because she knew she was not completely ready to raise a child. She didn't have a place of her own. After the shock factor wore off, Savannah got on the ball to make some changes in her life to prepare for this new bundle of joy.

At 17 weeks, Savannah and Adam found out they were having a baby girl. Savannah immediately thought of her adopted mother, Joanna Lee Lane, who passed away in 2010. Savannah quickly decided to name her JoLeanna in her honor. JoLeanna Louise Lane Franklin.



The pregnancy was going normal and Savannah finally found a place to settle in.

At only 34 weeks, Savannah began experiencing issues, she was not gaining weight, her stomach was not measuring to what it should be and she noticed JoLeanna was not moving as much as she should be.

Just in case, Savannah decided to take herself to the hospital to be monitored. It was then that they realized JoLeanna's heartbeat was dropping and Savannah needed to deliver as soon as possible.

"In that hour, her heart rate kept dropping and the next thing I knew I was being airlifted," said Savannah.

Savannah was flown to Barnes Jewish Hospital to have an emergency classical c-section.

"I was on 3 hours of sleep these whole 3 days and I was balling my eyes out begging for them to not cut me open," said Savannah. "They got her out and I literally fought sleep just to hear her cry. Once I heard her cry, the nurse showed me her footprints, I saw her incubator and they let me give her a kiss. The next thing I knew I was awake in a totally different part of the hospital."

She was delivered Dec 18th at 4:44 a.m. at only 2 lbs 6 ounces and 14 ½ inches. JoLeanna quickly assumed the nickname, Bitty.

"They found blood clots and knots in my placenta and the blood flow was not going right in her umbilical cord which was a result of her being diagnosed with Inner Uterine Growth Restriction (IUGR)," said Savannah.

JoLeanna was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit for 53 days with Savannah by her side every single day. That was not only JoLeanna's home for those days, but Savannah and Adam's as well.

Adam, who was on a job out of state was finally able to make it home to meet his daughter on Christmas Eve and immediately fell in love, giving her his own nickname, Boogie. From then on, the new family's fight for her future was their main goal.

Together, the new family learned how to correctly feed JoLeanna, how to regulate her body temperature with skin-to-skin contact and basically how to properly care for a premature baby with her many medical needs.



JoLeanna's adrenal gland was not making cortisol (a stress hormone), her pancreas was making too much insulin (opposite of a diabetic), her thyroid was not functioning properly, she had slight damage in her optic nerve and JoLeanna's brain was also missing a piece of the septum pellucidum.

The autopsy report revealed that JoLeanna had septo-optic dysplasia which was a result of most of the symptoms mentioned above.

Though JoLeanna had a lot of medical issues, it was believed that she could live a normal life with the assistance of therapy and family support.

After 53 days in the hospital, Adam and Savannah were finally able to take JoLeanna home on Feb. 9.

"She hated the car seat but loved Adam's truck, it rocked her to sleep," said Savannah. "I was scared out of my mind. It was the first time I had to do all the meds and stuff by myself. Adam's mom helped out a lot though, so I am more than grateful for that."

The first few days went fine until Friday evening, when JoLeanna started getting a little fussy.

"We went into Saturday, I gave her a bath, her newborn photos were taken and everything seemed just fine," said Savannah. "I checked her blood sugar, as I did before every feeding, and called the specialist because her blood sugar was high. The specialist said she could possibly have a virus and Monday would decide if she needed to increase one of her medications."

Late Saturday night, Savannah called her pediatrician because she felt like something was wrong. The pediatrician said to call after her next feeding if she didn't take in a certain amount.

Eleven o'clock came and her meds were given, her diaper was changed and her blood sugar was checked once again.

"She didn't really want to take her bottle so I gave her a pacifier and I put her on my chest to relax before bed," said Savannah. "When it was time for her to go to bed, I noticed she was trying to cry but nothing would come out. I blew in her face to catch her breath but she still wasn't breathing right."

Savannah then ran upstairs holding Bitty close to her and told a family member to call 911. At that point Bitty had completely stopped breathing.

“I took her to the table, unbuttoned her sleeper and began performing CPR on her until the paramedics got there,” said Savannah.



“I knew once she stopped breathing, as much of a part of me wanted me to believe she was going to be ok, I knew she was gone,” said Savannah. “But even then, I kept thinking if I could just keep doing this, she will be ok, so I did.”

The paramedics arrived and took over.

“I was able to ride in the ambulance with her but they made me ride in front,” said Savannah. “I kept asking if she had a pulse and they kept telling me that they are breathing for her, so at this point, I didn’t know the fate of my only child.”

She was rushed into Alton Memorial’s Emergency Room in the bare hands of the paramedic and several medical professionals stepped in to do everything they could.

“Adam was in Ohio during all this,” said Savannah. “I was on the phone with him the whole time. I was actually on the phone with him when the doctor told me.”

Bitty was pronounced dead at 1 a.m.

JoLeanna's Visitation is this Friday, Feb. 20 from 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. and her funeral begins at noon. Both the visitation and funeral are located at Paynic's Home for Funerals located at 618 E. Airline Drive in East Alton. The family asks that only friends and family attend, no media invited.

To see full obituary and details of the funeral, please visit www.paynicfh.com.

To help Savannah and Adam with the medical expenses, contributions can be made at www.gofundme.com.

