

Jeanine & Justin N. (Liam's Story) (Ambassador Family Speech - Butterfly Ball)

Lauren's Hope Foundation supported the miracle that kept our little guy alive being invited to speak tonight is an honor and we are excited to have the opportunity to explain how grateful we are. I have to admit this was definitely the scariest thing I have ever gone through; it is every mother's nightmare. Ann, you are a stronger woman than I and I am sure of this. Since this experience I have learned the lesson of taking life day by day. Before this, I was a person that was always in control of what happened and how things would turn out. I think going through this experience was God's way of reminding me that he, of course, is always in control. Being pregnant for the first time, you have all these expectations of how things will turn out, you spend months just imagining the nurse placing that warm baby in your arms. The fairy tale expectations turned to uncertainty as I realized surgery would be required for our son to be born. Then in the OR I still felt optimistic since I thought at least I was healthy and would come through the c-section okay, it wasn't the worst thing in the world to need surgery, and my husband was right by my side and the baby would be pulled out and he would be crying and everything would be okay, then even that expectation became a fairy tale as I realized my worst nightmare was coming true. At this moment I realized my husband, Justin, was experiencing a husband and father's worst nightmare at once, as his wife and son were both in danger.

I knew there was urgency felt by the doctors and nurses, however I never expected what I was about to see in the OR. I basically saw the doctors pull Liam's lifeless, blue body out. Reflecting on the experience this is where I can truly start to think about what Lauren's Hope Foundation means to us. As I was sitting there holding Jeanine's hand and comforting her, my mind was racing and I started HOPING... I started to HOPE Liam would breathe, cry, open his eyes, eat, smile and most of all be okay. I was also concerned about my wife, but deep down inside I knew she was strong (the strongest woman I know besides my mom) and she would be okay. As time progressed and we still were in the OR and had not received any updates on Liam's status I was thinking the worst but HOPING for the best. Now, we had zero control over the subsequent events. Hope was all we had. I can't imagine the feelings Jeanine was experiencing as she replays the preceding hours in her mind.

At this point in time for me the nightmare got worse as I then realized Liam had never cried. I asked to see him. Shock and fear were probably the only

things helping keeping me calm as I was told he was going to be placed on a ventilator. Then I was stitched up and told that I would have to go to the intensive care unit. We would see how I did through the night. Distress overcame me as they informed us Liam would be transferred to LVH. This was the most devastating thing a mother can hear, when I wanted to hold, kiss and hug my son all I could do is watch him through a little window in the transport isolette. As I was laying in recovery with everything happening around me, All I could do was keep telling myself that they were going to help him, he was going to get treatment, they are going to take good care of him, they have something that could actually help – as they rolled him away that's all I could quietly repeat in my head to keep calm. We had no idea what we were going to experience next. All we knew was it wasn't going to be easy, but we needed to keep our strength for Liam's sake.

After only meeting Dr. Dickey for a couple of minutes, I quickly realized we didn't have to HOPE Liam was going to receive the best care we knew he would. It wasn't until Liam was almost halfway through the therapeutic hypothermia via head cooling that we found out the equipment was just dedicated less than 24 hours before Liam was born. We also found out the head cooling equipment he was on was donated by the foundation the Flood's started in the memory of Lauren. And this was all made possible by the generosity shown by all of you sitting here tonight. While it was extremely difficult being in the Nicu for 3 days unable to do anything but watch my son being "cooled" I remembered what Dr. Dickey had told us Wednesday night in the recovery room before Liam was transferred, she said "it can't hurt, it can only help." This memory, as well as all of the encouragement from the Nicu staff helped me get through this experience without having my wife by my side. They told me "Liam won't remember any of this when he is older." The mood began to change from uncertain anxiety to hopeful concern as it was apparent many angels were watching over our son.

After I felt everything had literally been taken away from me, my fairy tale, my family, my beautiful boy, I was given hope. This hope lifted me up as I spent my lonely night without Liam in the ICU hoping I would make it through. It was very hard, but I knew that Justin was by his side. This hope held me together as I cried on the maternity unit every time I heard the healthy cry of a newborn baby. this hope gave me the strength to get out of that hospital bed because I knew I had to get to LVH to see Liam, and the head cooling therapy gave me hope which made it possible for me to face

the uncertainties of the future. As we continued to hope for the best, reuniting with my family was the best feeling in the world.

Shortly after being reunited as a family, some of the things we had hoped for came true. Liam was extubated after the rewarming process and had no problems breathing on his own. He opened his eyes even though he was still drowsy from all the medication. By far, the best experience in the hospital we had was getting to hold Liam for the first time. We had to wait a long 5 days, but words can't describe the joy we felt when we held him. Soon after this he began eating. And even though we had to wait over a week we heard our first cry. You may call us crazy, but that was one of the best sounds we have ever heard. We even still have the voicemail saved with Liam screaming in the background, the nurse had called to see if we were going to make it for his feeding, obviously Liam didn't want to wait for us to get back to the NICU. Slowly, all of the tubes and wires fell away and we began to see the baby we had been hoping for all along. Since we have been home, we have even been seeing signs of Liam smiling which have been some of the happiest times of our lives.

Thank you is not enough, there are not enough words in the world to express my gratitude as a mother, and wife. Finally, I would like to say that I was absolutely amazed with the program that was put together by Ann Flood and LVH. Dr. Dickey was absolutely correct that this program needed to be done right, and both of you could not have done a better job, I know now that there was lots of training and preparation for this therapy and everything came together just right. I felt confident putting my baby in your care, because you were confident, from explaining how the cooling worked, to every nurse and doctor in the NICU, your professionalism and reassurance never faltered, I was in awe when I found out he was the very first baby to have this process completed at LVH. Your constant reassurance made going through this so much easier, and I can't thank you enough from the bottom of my heart.

Again, thank you is not enough, there are not enough words in the world to express my gratitude as a (father), and husband. As I have told our story over the last couple of months people have been amazed by "how well we are dealing with the situation." And I began to think why....why is it that we seem to be doing so well...and I keep coming back to HOPE. We have

hope because all of you are sitting here tonight, We have hope because the Flood's dedication to Lauren's Legacy. And we will continue to HOPE.

Hope to see Liam continue growing

Hope to see Liam develop

Hope to see Liam crawl

Hope to see Liam walk

Hope to hear Liam talk

Hope to go on school field trips with Liam

Hope to watch Liam play sports

And Hope to see Liam help others....

We want to thank all of you sitting here tonight who's donations helped bring this head cooling equipment to LVH.

We want to thank our family members who were by our side throughout this whole experience.

And Finally and maybe most of all, we want to thank Ann and Dan Flood's dedication to letting Lauren's Legacy live on through the generosity of the Lauren's Hope Foundation. We are amazed by the strength that they have shown to take such a tragic event and turn it around to help others. In the future we would be honored to be a part of the foundation, to help continue to give HOPE to brain injured children and their families, and continue Lauren's legacy.