



Joliet before her first surgery

My daughter's name is Joliet Sanaa. She was born May 31, 2007 with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. I learned that she had a cleft lip during a 3-D ultrasound. My physician had done several ultrasounds, but the cleft was not detected because my daughter was either covering her mouth with her hand or she was hiding behind my placenta. I admit after I found out that she had a cleft lip, I was devastated. I prayed for a miracle each night. I prayed that my baby would not have a cleft and that she would be healthy.

Fortunately, on May 31st I was blessed with a beautiful and healthy little girl. Yes, she was born with a cleft lip, but I can honestly say, I am tremendously thankful. This experience has allowed me to gain so much. In a world that I consider vain and very conscientious of the outer experience, one must think I am crazy to be thankful that my child was born with a cleft. However, this experience has shaped my character, strengthened my faith, and it has allowed me to come in contact with some amazing people.

My daughter has given me so much courage and strength.

She had her first surgery to repair her lip on September 12, 2007. Her appearance has changed, but her spirit, laughter, and joy have not wavered. Every tear I have shed has been wiped or eradicated by supportive people and, of course, by her beautiful smile. I truly appreciate every single smile she sends my way because I am aware of the prayers that went into her repair. Mothers are such special people – it makes it an even more meaningful experience when your baby is different. We love, we hurt, but we know in the end we will do absolutely anything to help our children. Yes, Joliet's little lip was touched by angel. She had a cleft lip and has a



A beautiful smile

cleft palate, but it does not dictate who she is; it will only enhance what she will become.

Joliet's next surgery is November 28th to repair her soft palate. Then she will have another surgery on her hard palate sometime in February. Yes, I will be nervous – who wouldn't be – but I know that everything will be ALRIGHT!!



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