

M.E.'s Team Foundation Makes Generous Gift to Pediatric Cardiology Research

As a former Major League reliever, Scott Proctor was used to the pressure of coming into a close game, in front of thousands of fans, and trying to pitch his way to victory. Nothing, however, prepared Scott and his wife, Carrie, for the news they received 12 years ago that their three-week-old daughter, Mary Elizabeth ("M.E.") needed life-saving open-heart surgery to correct a dangerous narrowing of her aorta.



Scott and Carrie Proctor present a check from M.E.'s Team Foundation to Melvin Almodóvar, M.D., chief of pediatric cardiology at the Miller School of Medicine and director of the Children's Heart Center at Jackson Health System's Holtz Children's Hospital.

"It was terrifying," said Scott, a lifelong resident of Martin County. "We didn't know if we would lose our daughter."

Thanks to emergency surgery at Holtz Children's Hospital at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital, M.E. is now a healthy and active seventh-grader who loves to dance and tumble.

In gratitude to the team that saved her life, led by Eliot R. Rosenkranz, M.D., professor of surgery at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, the Proctor family has made it a priority to support research in pediatric cardiology at UM.

Recently, they returned to the Miller School campus to present a check for \$10,000 to Melvin Almodóvar, M.D., chief of pediatric cardiology and director of the Children's Heart Center at Holtz Children's Hospital. The gift brings the Proctor family's total giving to UM to more than \$23,000.

"We are hoping that through the money donated to research today, problems like this can be easily detected, so others don't have to go through what we went through," said Carrie.

M.E. was born with an aortic coarctation – a narrowing of the aorta, which branches off the heart and delivers oxygen-rich blood to the body. When a coarctation occurs, it can affect blood flow, making it harder for the heart to pump blood through the body.

A pediatrician spotted the problem when M.E. was just three weeks old, and within hours, a helicopter airlifted her to Miami for emergency surgery. Eight days later, Carrie and Scott were able to take her home.



Mary Elizabeth “M.E.” Proctor received life-saving open heart surgery when she was just several weeks old

“M.E.’s experience speaks to how far we’ve come in pediatric cardiology,” said Dr. Almodóvar, who is also the George E. Batchelor Endowed Chair in Pediatric Cardiology and director of Cardiac Intensive Care.

“Children who have the potential to become very sick can completely reverse their course and recover with the right treatments. We are so grateful for the support of the Proctor family so we can continue our research in this area.”

Following the experience, the Proctors established the M.E.’s Team Foundation, which provides financial support for children in need in the Stuart area where they live. The foundation hosts several programs, including sponsoring youngsters who cannot afford to join Little League programs, helping to rebuild fields in underprivileged communities, and providing socks and underwear in schools for children who often do not have those necessities.

It is a mission close to home for Scott, who played ball on the same local fields before getting a scholarship to play at Florida State University and later being drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1998. He spent eight years in the minor leagues when the New York Yankees called him up. He also played for the Florida Marlins during his big league career.

Now Scott and the entire Proctor family, including M.E.’s siblings, Camden, 15, Cooper, 11, Chase, 8, and Maggie Kate, 6, come up with ideas to support M.E.’s Team Foundation. Though M.E.’s surgery was successful, a cardiologist still must monitor her condition.

“I am forever grateful for the amazing doctors and nurses who saved my life,” M.E. said.

Her family says it is a small price to pay for having their daughter with them.

“If it weren’t for the University, we would be without our

daughter, so it is the least we can do to prevent this,” said Scott. “We are so appreciative for what they’ve done.”