



When Ben Alexander Schuetz (center) was born Feb. 23, 2010. Parents Nathan and Kelly Schuetz (standing, center and right) of New Baden decided to donate the umbilical cord blood which is used to treat more than 70 pediatric and adult diseases. With the family are big brother Jack, now 3, Dr. Anne Doll-Pollard, MD, (seated) of Southern Obstetric and Gynecologic Associates who handled the delivery, and Cathy Bostick (standing, left) of the Women and Infants Center at St. Joseph's Hospital in Breese where the Schuetz family delivered.

know about the development—obstetrician/gynecologist Anne Doll-Pollard, MD, of Southern Obstetric and Gynecologic Associates (SOGA) handled the delivery—and posted the news on SOGA's Facebook site.

“If I put it on their (Facebook) wall, and someone sees that, maybe it would help someone decide to donate cord blood. I really want other moms to hear this story and donate their cord blood too. It's really incredible that you can help another family by donating,” Kelly said.

Although Ben Alexander Schuetz is only eight months old, already he's a hero.

Ben's parents, Kelly and Nathan Schuetz of New Baden, made the decision to donate umbilical cord blood following his delivery Feb. 23 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Breese. The family has since been informed by the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank that it's probably a match. “Saving a life at eight months old—that's outrageous,” Kelly Schuetz said.

“It sent chills through me,” said Kelly Schuetz, a stay-at-home mom. “We're so excited – we never imagined he'd be a match for someone.” Husband and dad Nathan is a contractor for Ameren in St. Louis.

The family became aware of the potential match when a St. Louis Cord Blood Bank representative called to inquire about Ben's health. “They have to do that—make sure the cord blood is healthy—before making the donation,” Kelly Schuetz said. “I told them he was healthy and thriving and they told me he was a match for someone.”

The family has received few details except that the potential recipient has a life-threatening plasma disorder and it may be several weeks or months before the transplant is completed. *(The family has since been informed that the donation may be shipped out immediately.)*

Kelly wanted to let her obstetrician's office

About 53 percent of families delivering at the St. Joseph-Breese Women and Infants Center donate cord blood to the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center, said Helen Essenpreis, WIC director. The hospital has participated in the cord blood donation program since 1996.

The donation process is not disruptive and offered at no charge. If there is any concern about the safety of the mother or baby, collection is not made.

"It didn't take more than 60 seconds to do the whole donation, it wasn't in the way of anything and kind of goes along with everything. When Ben was born, my husband cut the cord, the Dr. Doll-Pollard put the baby on my stomach and she did her thing," Kelly Schuetz said. "It didn't disrupt anything."

"After the baby is born, a small amount of blood, generally between three and five ounces, is collected from the placenta and umbilical cord," Essenpreis said. The blood is collected after the umbilical cord has been cut and is non-invasive.

"Cord blood contains potentially life-saving stem cells and this procedure is a non-controversial method of collection," Essenpreis said. "If the blood is not collected, it's discarded."

According to the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank, cord blood is used to treat more than 70 diseases including leukemia, lymphoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and various types of anemia. It is used successfully for both pediatric and adult patients.

SOGA staff initially brought up the cord blood donation possibility and provided the necessary permission forms which Kelly completed while in labor. The family did not donate cord blood when they had their first child, Jack, now 3, who was born in Springfield, Mo. "Maybe there wasn't a cord blood bank where we were before," Kelly Schuetz said.

Dr. Doll-Pollard was pleased to be part of the process. "I'm excited that I had a small role in helping another family," she said. "I think it's wonderful that Kelly and the Schuetz family took the time to share their experience on our Facebook page. Even though we have a large percentage of families that chose to donate, their story may encourage even more donations."

Kelly Schuetz hopes that is the case. "If you don't donate or bank it yourself, it goes into medical waste. You never know if your baby is the one who may save someone's life. You'd want someone out there to be a match for your baby," she said.

Participating in the cord blood program also supports the hospital's mission to minister to those in need, Essenpreis said. "We are contributing to saving people's lives. "The cord blood collected may be used to treat a variety of diseases—it's the ultimate recycling."