

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

## AS FUGATE QUADRUPLETS GROW, THREE ENJOYING FIRST BOTTLES

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JACKSON, Miss. – Eight weeks after their premature birth, two of Kimberly and Craig Fugate’s identical quadruplets popped a celebratory bottle.

Not of champagne, but their very first one-ounce bottles of formula specially blended for preemies. Kayleigh and Kristen on Friday joined sister Kenleigh in graduating to a bottle, right after Kenleigh topped off her third of the day. Kelsey’s not quite ready for a bottle, but should be soon after her breathing becomes more regulated.

“She took 25 out of 30,” mom Kimberly said of Kristen, a feeding just short of 30ccs, or a 1-ounce bottle.

The quadruplets’ journey began Feb. 8 at the Winfred L. Wiser Hospital for Women at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Since then, Kimberly Fugate has shuttled between Wiser’s neonatal intensive care unit and the Ronald McDonald House, where she’s able to live pending the babies’ release about the time of their May 2 due date. Dad Craig tends the home fires in Tylertown with their daughter Katelyn, who turns 11 on April 24.

Kimberly Fugate gets tired now and then. “But as long as they’re good, I’m good,” she said. “I haven’t been home but three nights since I had them.”

A nursery hasn’t been prepared. There’s simply been no time. But, Fugate said, that should be remedied by this past weekend’s county-wide shower hosted by the family’s church, Calvary Temple Pentecostal in Tylertown.

Already, Fugate said, the quads’ personalities are beginning to emerge. She’ll be able to tell more when she gets better at telling them apart, Fugate said.

“They know my voice,” she said, leaning close to Kenleigh’s face and asking: “Do you love Mama?”

“I take a picture of their name, then a picture of that baby on my phone,” Fugate said. “They do truly look identical. Kenleigh is a little bit smaller, so her size tells on her. But she was first off the ventilator and first on the bottle, and the first that got the kangaroo care.”

That’s when Fugate gets to hold a baby bare chest to bare chest, much like a mother kangaroo snuggles her baby in her pouch.

They’re steadily gaining weight, with all at least doubling their birth weight: Kristin on Monday weighed 5 pounds, 15 ounces; Kayleigh and Kelsey, each 5 pounds, 2 ounces; and Kenleigh, 4 pounds, 10 ounces.

It's hard, Fugate said, to keep a routine with the quads in the midst of nursing shift changes and doctor visits. "I don't get here at a certain time, but I try to make it when the doctors are on their rounds. That gives me an idea of how they are doing."

Fugate is meticulous in cradling and feeding the quads. She puts on a fresh hospital gown between each feeding – her choice, Fugate said, and not a nursery rule.

Fugate on Friday draped Kenleigh over her palm a few minutes into her third bottle and patted her gently on the back. "She burped two big burps for me, and kept on sucking," Fugate said. "For her to be the smallest, she's showing them all out.

"They all love to suck a pacifier, which helps with the bottle."

She's hopeful all can go home by their due date. That's especially true for Katelyn, who has yet to hold one of her little sisters.

"She is so, so ready," Fugate said of Katelyn. "She will be a big help."

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