



EVAN E. PARKER | THE TIMES Abby Wodrich, a 1-year-old girl from Porter, needs a kidney transplant and will be getting one from her father, David Wodrich. Chefs and chocolatiers have planned a benefit for the family's medical expenses.

Life is liked with lots of chocolates

And one could be saved with help from sweet fund-raiser

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS
bwilliams@nwitimes.com
219.462.5151

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PORTER | Abigail Wodrich, walking for about a week, is now up to eight steps.

With special help from her dad -- and a whole lot of chocolate lovers -- the plan is to keep those steps growing through a long life.

One-year-old Abby will receive a kidney transplant from her father, David Wodrich, in April, funded in part by a Valentine's-themed chocolate gala in Chicago featuring some of the city's top chefs and the country's top chocolatiers.

Guests at next month's bash will taste a lot of the sweet stuff, of course. Surrounded by displays of chocolate sculpture and chocolate clothing, they can also create their own truffles. And they'll be treated to something called chocolate body art.

Proceeds from the event will go to Abby's fund with the Children's Organ Transplant Association for her transplant-related expenses. Part of the proceeds will also go to Children's Memorial Hospital, where her surgery will take place.

In November 2004, two months before mother Lisa Wodrich's due date, Abby became entangled in the womb with her twin sister Emma, who died before birth. Because of

interrupted blood flow to her organs, Abby was left with less than 5 percent of kidney function. Her first three months were spent in the hospital.

She was released on Valentine's Day 2005, which makes the timing and theme of this year's chocolate event special.

"Definitely a significant date for us," Lisa Wodrich said.

The event grew out of the many "ins" the Wodriches have in the Chicago food community, thanks to Lisa Wodrich's job as a food company salesperson and David Wodrich's 20 years as a chef.

Lisa Wodrich said she always expected to give up one of her kidneys for Abby, even though both she and David Wodrich were identified as matches. But she's been through two C-sections in the past three years, and that's enough as far as David Wodrich is concerned.

"It's my turn to be cut open," he said with a laugh.

Lisa Wodrich said it's an awful feeling to have two people she loves undergoing surgery at the same time.

"I'm terrified," she said. "I'm terrified for him to go through it. I'd rather it was me."

But David Wodrich, who is now a full-time father to Abby and her 3-year-old brother Ethan, professes much more equanimity.

"I couldn't be happier that I'm a match," he said. "There's really no second thoughts on it for me either. I don't worry about it."

The experience, Lisa Wodrich said, will leave David Wodrich and Abby with a very special and strong bond.

"He's a great dad," she said.

Abby, walking but not yet talking, hopefully will say the same some day.



EVAN E. PARKER | THE TIMES One-year-old Abby Wodrich plays Tuesday, with her father, David, at their Porter home. A complication during pregnancy led to blood being deprived from Abby's organs before birth. It also killed her twin sister Emma in the womb.