

TRANSCRIPT

Maternity Moments by Northside Hospital

*S1E1: Maternity Moments. Kelli Ledford:
Nine weeks early meant "she was going to be a fighter."*

[00:00:00.415] - NARRATOR

Kelli Ledford is a graphic designer in the Atlanta suburb of Gwinnett County. When she gave birth to her son, Davis, five years ago, she did not know preeclampsia would complicate the delivery. Preeclampsia creates high risk pregnancies and is marked by alarmingly high blood pressure and potential organ damage. Before trying to have a second child, Ledford formed a deep relationship with her OB/GYN, Dr. Melanie Watkins. Ledford recorded this conversation for Maternity Moments with Watkins about their shared experience. The journey included two trips to the hospital while Ledford carried her second child before she ended up in an operating room at Northside Hospital Gwinnett, nine weeks before her due date.

[00:00:45.105] - KELLI LEDFORD

Around 27 weeks, I had already previously been taking my blood pressure twice a day. And I would text at the end of the day, Dr. Watkins, what they were, and she would send me a smiley face just to reassure me that they were still OK, but

[00:01:02.595] - DR. MELANIE WATKINS

(LAUGHTER) ... Birth is a frown.

[00:01:06.315] - KELLI LEDFORD

Yes. Birth is a frown. Or, like ...

[00:01:07.875] - DR. MELANIE WATKINS

Holy crap emoji.

[00:01:11.565] - KELLI LEDFORD

Yeah, I got a couple of those. Great. But around 27 weeks, I think, my bottom number hit 100. And so I texted her and she was like, OK, I'll see you in my office at 11:30, which that was probably like an hour after I'd send her the text.

[00:01:31.665] - KELLI LEDFORD

And so I went in and of course my blood pressure was still high and she, she looked at me with puppy dog eyes and says, please don't kill me, but you've got to to triage.

[00:01:43.731] - DR. MELANIE WATKINS

Laughter

[00:01:43.875] - KELLI LEDFORD

And that is when I, well that's when I was like, oh, no. Like, are you serious? Come on. You know, it's high in the office. But if you send me home, it'll be OK. It'll be OK. But I ended up going in and we took some blood pressure medicine and for some reason it did not interact with me well. And I ended up bottoming out of my blood pressure. So that brought me an overnight stay.

[00:02:13.245] - NARRATOR

The day she ended up in the operating room to deliver her second child still makes Ledford teary eyed. It's a fresh memory from May 2020. But she said she owes that day, her journey and the arrival of her daughter, Kiley, to Dr. Melanie Watkins.

[00:02:29.115] - KELLI LEDFORD

I just remember that that day felt like a failure that my body had given up on me and that as a momma I couldn't keep my baby in. And I couldn't provide the baby what she needed. And so going into it, I felt like

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a failure. But then Dr. Watkins came in and she's like, it's a great day to have a baby. I just remember going into the operating room. I just I didn't know what was going to happen.

[00:02:54.415] - KELLI LEDFORD

I didn't know if Kiley was going to cry for me. I didn't know what she would look like. They tried to prepare me that I wouldn't get to touch her. I wanted to hold her because she would immediately have to be with you. And I remember getting into the operating room and sitting up on the table. And when my first C-section, the nurse that had been with me that day that I didn't know was just sitting there talking to me and trying to prepare me for what was about to happen.

[00:03:22.405] - KELLI LEDFORD

But this time around, Dr. Watkins came in and she put her forehead against my forehead and just told me it's almost over. You've done it. You're going to get this baby here, and the baby's going to be fine. And I just remember taking a big exhale, like, I've done this. I've done it. And so, Dr. Watkins, I will always remember you rubbing my shoulders and telling me it's almost over, you've done good and we're getting this baby out.

[00:03:58.525] - DR. MELANIE WATKINS

Omigosh, yeah, I remember that too. It's, it's so scary, you know, that I think everything was just even more scary with you because - and then you throw COVID in there. So not only do you see your liver enzymes are rising significantly, HELLP syndrome. And then you hear the fact in the middle of a pandemic, COVID, everyone's wearing masks, your baby's going to the NICU, and you don't you know, I'm not going to be able to see or touch her. I, just, yeah, like I said, you do this long enough and your patients become family and you feel, I mean, I felt how nervous you were and how, you know, it's just it can be quite terrifying, which is why I wanted to be in there. I think by the time we we got started, I think we were starting to feel better.

[00:04:45.625] - KELLI LEDFORD

I was. And then the bright spot for me was when you pulled Kiley out and she looked at you with a mean mug and was like now what are you doing? Like, why did you pull me out of this warm area.

[00:05:02.785] - DR. MELANIE WATKINS

.. way too early.

[00:05:04.405] - KELLI LEDFORD

Yes, she gave me this mean mug and then she kind of and she yelled at you. She screamed. And I knew that that was my child. She was sassy, like her mother, and that she was going to be a fighter from then on.

DISCLAIMER: This is an autogenerated transcript. It is a digital approximation of what was spoken during this podcast but is not to be taken as 100 percent verbatim. Errors may exist.