

Meet Maci Hunziker! She is a lively three-and-a-half year old girl who had a rocky start. Shortly after her birth in November 2011, her family began a roller coaster ride of health crises, worry and stress connected with the care needs of a very sick baby. Maci came home from the hospital with her parents, Katie and Clint, but began losing weight and was not gaining muscle tone. It was discovered that she would eventually need surgery and numerous medical procedures due to a rare heart defect. The shock of the development of so many complications in so young a child was great and hard to comprehend. What was easy to understand, though very hard to manage, was the care that Maci would need.

The family traveled to appointments with specialists over 200 miles from their home. They had a fragile new baby with heart monitors and feeding tubes. Maci's parents tried to provide various therapies supervised by specialists at the distant facility, but her development was lagging and falling farther and farther behind that of other children. Her parents were scared that some yet to be discovered medical complication was the reason. They also feared the long-term hidden effects of enduring medical trauma so early in life.

They heard a friend talking about the therapy department at Rooks County Health Center (RCH), which is about a mile from their home, and decided to call them. They were made to feel welcome and at ease. They talked to physical therapist A.J. Thomas, speech therapist Tara Staab, and occupational therapist Kyle Ahlenstorf, local professionals, who were willing to work with the specialists in the distant medical center to devise a therapy plan for Maci that could be implemented close to her home.

Today, Maci is thriving both physically and mentally. She looks forward to her therapy sessions where she receives individualized one-on-one attention and is learning to ride her tricycle and do all the things that three year olds like to do. The therapy is provided in a way that feels like play to Maci, and she regards the therapists as adult friends who help her do the things she wants to do. Her family is very grateful that services and care are available in their home community as the stress of maintaining the schedule of appointments Maci needed was becoming overwhelming. "Without this group of people and the medical providers in this small community, we may have given up hope, because the journey was getting much too difficult," said Maci's mother Katie.