

What is a congenital heart defect?

A congenital heart defect is an abnormality in any part of the heart that is present at birth. Heart defects originate in the early weeks of pregnancy when the heart is forming. In most cases, scientists do not know what makes a baby's heart develop abnormally. Genetic and environmental factors appear to play roles.

Scientists are making progress in understanding the genetics of heart defects. Since the 1990s, they have identified about 10 gene mutations that can cause isolated heart defects. For example, a March of Dimes grantee identified a gene that can cause a heart defect called an Atrial Septal defect; a hole between the upper chambers of the heart and one that may contribute to Hypo plastic Left Heart Syndrome; underdevelopment of the heart's main pumping chamber.

Environmental factors can contribute to congenital heart defects. Women who contract rubella during the first three months of pregnancy have a high risk of having a baby with a heart defect. Other viral infections, such as the flu, also may contribute, as may exposure to certain industrial solvents. Increase the risk of heart defects.

Each year, 1 in 125 children in the United States are born with Congenital Heart Defects (CHDs). These defects may be so slight that the baby appears healthy for many years after birth or are so severe their life is in immediate danger. Most people are unaware that CHD is the most common birth defect in America. The Build My Heart Foundation is on a mission to build awareness and support families with children who have been affected with CHD,



(Baby Bryce after heart surgery)

How does your donation support a BMH family?

- \$25.00 donation will provide a family with one day of parking at the hospital.
- \$50.00 donation will provide a family with a tank of gas.
- \$100.00 donation will provide a family with one bag of groceries.
- \$150.00 donation will provide a family with one night stay at a local hotel so they can be closer to the hospital where their child is receiving treatment.

**build
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Our Heart Babies

[Heart baby Shiloh \(photo on front of brochure\)](#) "Shiloh suffers from left ventricular non-compaction syndrome, a type of cardiomyopathy. Her left ventricle of the heart which pumps blood and oxygen around the body is weak. She was transferred to UCSF Children's Hospital. Upon Shiloh's arrival, a PICC line was placed in to her heart and an IV in her head-the journey ahead of us is one of uncertainty, you see there is no surgery to repair "LVNC"," Hopefully Shiloh will grow out of this but if her heart was to deteriorate it could mean heart transplant. Thank God for the Build My heart foundation their support and their research, I am proud to be a member of this foundation", Says Heart mom, Natasha Griffith.

[Heart baby Destiny](#) "They performed open heart bypass surgery to fix two of her three holes. Her Cardiologist said- they will try and wait until Destiny is in her teens to repair the third hole," Says Heart mom Sarinna O'Neill.



"You guys are going to make me cry, Build My Foundation just keeps blessing my family"
Says , Heart mom Sarinna O'Neill

Mission Statement

The Build My Heart Foundation is a non-profit organization that provides emotional, social, and financial support to at-risk, low income, families with children affected by congenital heart disease. We accomplish our mission by:

- Identifying at-risk children affected by heart disease from low-income families in the East Bay.
- Promote awareness in our communities.
- Support early intervention, prevention, and state-of-the-art research.

Program Services

- Emotional Support/Counseling
- Financial Assistance
- Hospital Support
- Educational Activity Sponsorship
- Community Outreach
- Patient Equipment/Clothing
- Resource/Referrals
- Advocacy



The Inspiration

On February 9, 2010, Bryce Malik House (BMH) was born. Shockingly, baby Bryce was immediately diagnosed with complex congenital heart disease. To get through this experience with her new son, Ella pulled together her strength and her unconditional love for her son and on March 17, 2010, the Build My Heart Foundation was born. Ella made the decision on the day of Bryce's first open heart surgery to help other families who have children with heart disease.

To pass time while waiting for Bryce to return from surgery Ella created a scrapbook of Bryce's adventures. On the last page, she placed a sonogram picture of his defective heart at the center. And at the top of the page, she placed 3 building block stickers to spell out Bryce's initials, BMH. As she continued with the scrapbook she ended up spelling out Build My Heart. That's when the heart of the foundation started to beat.

