



B W H N I C U C L A S S O F 1 9 7 8

Song of life

Sometimes a very sick infant will pull through despite what *all* the tests and numbers say. “There’s a fight in some babies, a spirit that seems to radiate from them,” observes Carol Shockley, RN, a 26-year veteran who jokes that she has been in the NICU “since the dinosaurs roamed the earth.” While Shockley has witnessed dramatic medical advances, she says, “At times I feel there’s a power we don’t see, helping us along.”

So it was with 1.5 pound Natalie Nauss, born on May 31, 1978 at 26 weeks. Initially unable to breathe, Natalie spent six months in an incubator and another year on supplemental oxygen. Recalling the drama as if it were yesterday, the nurse explains, “You don’t resuscitate a baby for the third time or sit and hold that kid’s hand and not put away every detail.” She has kept in touch with the Nauss family for 19 years.

“We’ve learned a lot from kids like Natalie,” says NICU Director Steven Ringer, MD. Thanks to these tiny pioneers, he says, caregivers have learned more about how to keep

A pianist since the age of 6,
Natalie Nauss (foreground) loves to compose
and hopes to record her work on CD.
She often practices with sisters Nicole (left) and Nadia.

babies warm until they can regulate their own temperature; how to safeguard them from infection as their skin develops; how to feed them intravenously as their gastrointestinal systems

mature; and how to hasten the maturation of their lungs.

Today, Natalie, named four times to *Who’s Who Among American High School Students* for her musical, civic and academic achievements, says she’s a “completely normal kid.” A pianist since age 6, she loves to compose and hopes to record her work on CD. Now attending a community college, she is aiming for a bachelor’s in music education. “Music is another language—something that can help special-needs kids learn,” says Natalie, who once taught piano to an autistic girl. “These kids have been set aside, and I want to change that. They have a different way of learning, but it’s always creative.”

Natalie notes that the older she gets, the more she appreciates her parents—and her remarkable history. Right now, she’s working on a song with Carol Shockley in mind. The working title? “Miracle Baby.” ■