

SUMMER 2025

a publication of united regional foundation

Cornerstone

SPECIAL EDITION

BIG SUPPORT FOR OUR

Tiniest Treasures





On Our Cover

A Big Campaign for Tiny Treasures kicked off on June 3. Jerry Johnson announced a special lead gift. He is pictured with Amanda Quezada, Nursery Clinical Manager, holding

Annie, a mannequin representing a 26-week gestation baby. Read more on page 7.

On Our Pages



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LEADING WITH **ENERGY,** VISION & **VALUES**

This spring, we had the joy of welcoming Cory Edmondson as President and CEO of United Regional. He brings 30 years of healthcare leadership experience, most recently serving as CEO of Peterson Health in Kerrville, Texas. Cory holds degrees from Texas Tech and William Howard Taft University and is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Since day one, Cory has led with energy, vision, and a strong sense of values – emphasizing the importance of family, especially his wife, Angie. He remarked, “It’s been fast paced, but intentional. My top priority was meeting with organizational and community leaders to build relationships and gather perspectives. Listening to those around you is necessary to lead an organization.”

Cory added, “I look forward to United Regional’s growth and development. We have a tremendous



opportunity to take what has been established and work to move it to another level of excellence. The team at United Regional is incredible. I’ve been so impressed with the professionalism, pedigree of our staff and doctors, and the desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others.”

On a personal note, Cory and Angie experienced the joy of becoming grandparents this spring to beautiful Maggie. Moving to Wichita Falls has brought them closer to this precious bundle of love, adding even more happiness to their lives.

Oh Baby!

Faith and family form the foundation of my life, grounding me in everything that truly matters. Growing up in a bustling household with four siblings was just the beginning of my family experience. My dad came from a family of seven, and my mom was one of six, which meant I was surrounded by aunts, uncles, and a gazillion cousins. Many of my mom's relatives lived in Amarillo, while dad's were scattered across the rural areas of the Panhandle.

Some of my favorite childhood memories are from playing at my aunt and uncle's farm near Happy, Texas. It was the perfect spot for family gatherings. Imagine a bunch of kids climbing hay bales, getting tractor rides, and running around without a care in the world. That's where I first learned the true value of family connections.

As I grew older and started my own family, I realized that family wasn't just about blood relations. It's a multifaceted blessing. I have my workout family, church family, a family of close friends, donor family, and work family. Each one of these families has brought immense blessings into my life.

One thing that connects all these families is the sheer joy of welcoming new babies. Etched in my heart is the happiness of hearing each of our newborn sons' voices for the first time. Although it was a cry, it was the most beautiful sound I've ever heard.



One of the best parts of my job is interacting with our Women's and Children's staff, especially the amazing staff who help bring babies into the world and those who care for them in the nursery. They share extraordinary skills, compassion, patience, and tenderness.

Many of our dedicated team members have been working hard to bring a new Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit to United Regional. This expansion will allow us to care for infants born as early as 26 weeks gestation, which is approximately six months!

It's a project that has touched my heart deeply. This upgrade will meet a vital need in our community, giving our smallest patients, our tiny treasures, the best possible start in life. Seriously, could there be anything better? We'd love you to join our Tiny Treasures Team.

Cradled in love,

Noel Filer,
Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Noel".



NAVIGATING Pregnancy COMPLICATIONS

Did you know? United Regional delivers over 1,800

babies a year! Expectant mothers come from a nine-county area seeking high-quality maternity and neonatal care. Currently, our Level II Special Care Nursery provides expert care for infants born at 30 weeks gestation or later.

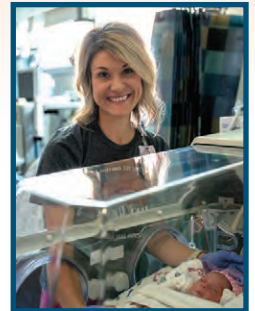
When complications occur in pregnancies of less than 30 weeks, expectant mothers need immediate care. Some of these complications include:

- Maternal hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Preterm labor
- Water breaking spontaneously
- Infection
- Trauma
- Emergencies including placental abruption (the placenta separates from the uterine wall before the baby is born), prolapsed umbilical cord (the cord slips down in front of the baby, reducing blood flow and oxygen to the baby), and low infant heart rate

This presents a challenge. To best serve these mothers, we must currently transfer them to the nearest Level III NICU, **which is over 100 miles away.** Having to travel is not only a physical burden on mothers and unborn babies during an already vulnerable time but also creates emotional stress due to the distance from their families, friends, and support systems.

“In cases of maternal complications, it is a scary time for parents as well as family members, especially grandparents,” said Avis Harris, Director of Women’s Services.

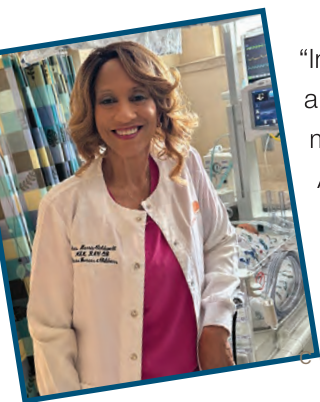
Amanda Quezada, Nursery Clinical Manager, added, “Mothers told they must deliver early are often very overwhelmed. Most women expect a full-term, healthy baby. When they learn they need to deliver emergently, and/or be transferred out of town for a higher level of care, it completely changes their plan and sense of control.”



Research shows that patients experience better outcomes when they receive care close to home, highlighting the importance of access to high-quality care within their community. United Regional is expanding nursery services to a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) to allow for more mothers and babies to receive expert care close to home.

We’re already well on our way to this important upgrade! Last fall, board-certified neonatologists joined the Special Care Nursery staff to provide expert care for both premature and full-term infants requiring higher levels of medical attention. This enhancement has enabled us to keep some expectant mothers experiencing complications at less than 30 weeks gestation, with the objective of stabilizing them until they reach a safer stage past the 30-week mark before delivery.

When we are fully authorized as a Level III NICU, United Regional anticipates serving an additional 40-50 infants annually, eliminating the need for transfer to other facilities. It will greatly help local families like McKenzie Underwood, featured on the next page.





At 29 weeks pregnant, McKenzie Underwood enjoyed a joyful baby shower celebrating the upcoming birth of her son. That night, she started feeling what she believed might be contractions, but as a first-time mother, she was uncertain. By the next morning, she was experiencing abdominal tightening every three minutes.

Concerned, she went to United Regional's Obstetrics Emergency Department for an evaluation. Doctors confirmed she was having contractions, so she was admitted and given medication to slow them down. Both McKenzie and her baby were closely monitored.

possible, but there were many times McKenzie was alone.

"Being alone and not knowing anyone in the metroplex was very stressful," she added.

The stress weighed heavily on the new dad as well.

"There was no peace of mind as I was constantly worried. If something happened to my wife or newborn son, I couldn't be there quickly, as it was at least a two-hour drive," commented Matt.



THE CHALLENGES OF *Premature Birth* MCKENZIE AND MATT'S STORY

When it became clear that McKenzie would deliver before reaching 30 weeks, she was airlifted to a metroplex hospital. "I was devastated because I know how wonderful the labor and delivery, postpartum, and nursery staff are at United Regional. Plus, I had to leave my home and family," McKenzie said. **"Little did I know then that I would have to stay in Fort Worth for two long, lonely months."** Parker was born weighing three pounds, four ounces.

McKenzie's husband, Matt, stayed by her side for two weeks after Parker was born. He then had to return to Wichita Falls to work, a tough decision that left the family separated during a challenging time. Matt traveled back and forth whenever

He added, "I was conflicted because I wanted to be with McKenzie and Parker but needed to be home to work and care for my other son. My mind was constantly in both places."



McKenzie emphasized, **"Wichita Falls would greatly benefit from having a NICU so that women delivering prematurely can stay close to home, near crucial family support."** With the addition of a Level III NICU to United Regional, families like McKenzie and Matt will be able to experience the peace of expert care at home and babies like Parker will receive the specialized care they need to grow and thrive.

Elevating Care

for Our Tiniest Patients

At United Regional, we believe every baby deserves the best possible start in life. That's why we're transforming our Special Care Nursery into a **Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)** — a significant step forward in our commitment to providing high-quality, compassionate care close to home. As we have shared, this initiative has already commenced, and we anticipate achieving Level III NICU designation in 2027.

Why This Matters

This expansion is more than bricks and mortar — it's about keeping families together during some of their most vulnerable moments. By upgrading to a Level III NICU, we'll be able to care for infants born as early as 26 weeks gestation, allowing 40–50 more families to remain in Wichita Falls each year instead of transferring to distant facilities. This means less travel, less stress, less expenses, and more time for parents to bond with their newborns — right here at home.

The new Level III NICU will be twice as large as the current nursery, increasing from 3,000 to 6,000 square feet. The expansion will feature eight private rooms, six bays, and a renovated full-term nursery. Specialized jet and high-frequency oscillating ventilators will support infants weighing 1-2 pounds and the most critically ill. These infants may need prolonged intubation for lung development. Each NICU Giraffe bed will have an Angel Eye Camera System, enabling families to view their newborns in real-time and stay virtually close, even when they can't be at the bedside. Neonatologists will be available 24/7.

"Everything that we do now — how we handle these babies and how we care for them — will determine the rest of their lives."

Amanda Quezada, Nursery Clinical Manager





A MATCH MADE IN

HEAVEN

When Nan Johnson and her family visited the Special Care Nursery at United Regional, the babies touched their hearts deeply. Nan, affectionately known as Granny, was moved to tears, recalling her own loved ones who had faced challenging pregnancies and early deliveries. Nan is the matriarch of the large, lively, and loving Johnson clan, who are faithful supporters of United Regional.

The Johnson family values having excellent healthcare available locally, including an independent healthcare system where decisions are made that benefit our community. One of those decisions is to elevate the current nursery at United Regional to a Level III NICU. This will give pregnant women who are experiencing complications the advantage of staying home, eliminating the stress of having to travel at such a difficult time.

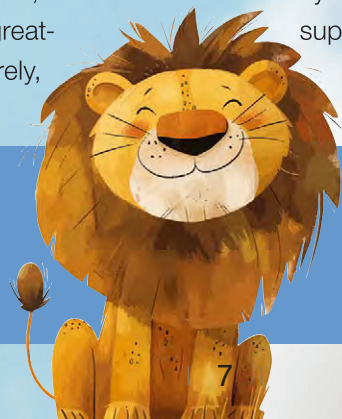
"It's important for us to have these services locally so preemies and their families can be together," Nan said. She shared that her grandchildren and great-granddaughter, who were born prematurely,

received exceptional NICU care. She is confident this expansion will greatly benefit the community.

At the Tiny Treasures Campaign kickoff on June 3, Jerry Johnson, Nan's son, made an exciting announcement: "We believe that the time is now to upgrade our current treatment area for premature babies and their families in our hometown. So, the Johnson family is kicking off this campaign to add a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at United Regional with a **\$1 million matching gift** challenge for this project." He praised the excellent work of United Regional's nursery staff and emphasized the need for this upgrade to care for babies born as early as 26 weeks gestation.

United Regional is extremely grateful to Nan and the Johnson family. Thanks to their generous matching gift, all donations up to \$1 million will be matched.

Jerry concluded, "I hope you'll all consider financially supporting this much-needed upgrade."



To learn more and join the Tiny Treasures Team with a donation, scan the QR code.

DOUBLE BLESSINGS:

Allison Gray, Kori Hoffman, Laura Ward, and Krista Zimpel serve as directors on the United Regional Foundation Board. They share a unique bond of having double blessings in their lives. Allison (wife of Dr. Von Gray), Kori (wife of Dr. Jason Hoffman), and Laura (wife of Chuck Ward) are mothers to twins, while Krista (wife of Daniel Zimpel) is a grandmother to twins. These dedicated super moms share their beloved twins with us, along with their unique perspectives on United Regional's expansion to a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and the impact it will have on the community.



ALLISON GRAY, mom to Leah and Kathryn, 10 years old

Leah and Kathryn are excited to start fifth grade this fall. Bursting with energy and joy, they love singing and dancing and recently had a blast performing in Frozen Jr. at the Wichita Theater. Their enthusiasm and zest for life bring much happiness to the Gray family.

Although they have different personalities, they share many interests. Kathryn plays the violin and Leah plays the piano. Both enjoy being twins — having a constant friend. Kathryn says, “Being a twin is so fun because I always have a friend.” Leah adds with a smile, “It’s good and bad — I’m never lonely, but I also never get to be alone!”

Allison says, “Having a NICU here in our community is crucial. When a baby is born early or needs extra care, getting help quickly makes all the difference. No parent should face a two-hour drive during such critical moments. A nearby NICU means babies get the care they need immediately, and parents can stay close to their support system. It’s all about keeping families together and giving these tiny fighters the best possible start.”



KORI HOFFMAN, mom to Jett and Halle, 1 year old

Jett is always on the go, strong and big like his dad, with a charming smile that wins hearts everywhere. Halle, sweet and sassy, is observant, beautiful, and loves to chat. She adores her “people” and often traps you for cuddles and reading.

Before having twins, Kori was a NICU Registered Nurse for seven years, passionately caring for tiny, innocent lives and their families.

Kori remarks, “I think this community is going to benefit greatly by having a NICU, because emergencies don’t just happen in big cities. Premature birth, respiratory distress, birth defects, and birth trauma are all examples of situations that can happen in any location, at any time. Having skilled neonatologists, NICU RNs, and advanced medical equipment ready at a moment’s notice for these babies is truly going to save lives.”

4 SETS OF TWINS

LAURA WARD, *mom to Michael and Matthew, 10 years old*

Both boys excel academically, with Matthew gravitating toward reading and writing, while Michael loves math. Both are strong athletes and play soccer, basketball, flag football, and compete in track and field. Michael enjoys cross-country running while Matthew chose tennis as his individual sport.

Laura is most proud of how good they are at just being people. Michael and Matthew are incredibly kind and compassionate. They are good to friends and strangers alike. And they are the heart of their family.

After birth, Matthew spent two weeks in a NICU, and Michael five weeks. Laura reflected that this is one of those things you never consider until you are in it. She commented, “Most NICU babies come into the world urgently. There is almost never time to plan or travel to a big city for care. Having the technology and talent to care for preemies right here at home will save lives! Proximity is everything.”



KRISTA ZIMPEL, *grandma to Sutton and Isla, 6 months old*

Krista’s heart expanded like never before when she became a grandmother earlier this year. Her active lifestyle earned her grandma name, GoGo. She is very grateful that her son and daughter-in-law, Travis and Savannah, live in Wichita Falls so she can be an active part of the twins’ lives. Besides being exceptionally cute, the girls are constantly discovering new things every day.

After birth, Sutton and Isla spent four weeks in United Regional’s Special Care Nursery. Krista experienced firsthand the importance of being close to newborn loved ones. “Being able to stay in Wichita Falls with the support of family and friends was extremely helpful.”

Reflecting on the expansion to a NICU, she added, “Embracing a community and family-centered approach in establishing a Level III NICU will not only empower highly trained professionals to deliver exceptional care to precious preemies but will also create a legacy of compassion, excellence, and unwavering support for generations to come. What we do in those first precious days plays a critical role in shaping the course of their lives.”





A BIG CAMPAIGN FOR

Tiny Treasures

The campaign kickoff was held on June 3 at the Forum, with guests including community supporters, Women's and Children's staff, and United Regional's senior leadership. The joyful event launched the nursery's expansion to a Level III NICU.





a UNITED REGIONAL
FOUNDATION and
CHILDREN'S
MIRACLE NETWORK
FUNDRAISER

Join us for this
TWO-DAY event!

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER **25**

LIVE PERFORMANCE BY

Eagle Eyes



THE WAREHOUSE

Doors Open • 5:30 p.m.

Dinner • 6:30 p.m.

Catered by Mavericks

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER **26**

**Lunch & 18-HOLE
Golf Scramble**

CHAMPIONS COURSE AT WEEKS PARK
12 p.m. • Lunch / 1 p.m. • Tee Off

*Party
ON THE
Green*



Pictured above, CMN Champions
Kyson and Colbie, Iowa Park, Texas.

• TABLE OF 8 - CONCERT + DINNER & GOLF
FOR 4 **\$1,300**

• TABLE OF 8 - CONCERT + DINNER
..... **\$1,000**

• TABLE OF 2 - CONCERT + DINNER **\$250**

• GOLF SCRAMBLE FOR 4 **\$600**

• HOLE SPONSORSHIP **\$150**

SCAN the QR code
for additional information
or to register.



Call or email Melissa Walker for more sponsorship opportunities
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For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made...

– Psalm 139:13-14 NIV

LEADERSHIP

The work of United Regional Foundation is overseen by a board of volunteer professionals committed to community leadership and the betterment of United Regional health care endeavors.

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