



*Emma, Cora and Eddie*



## “Never stop working for what you feel your family deserves.”

Eddie, a 29-year old dad in the Nurse-Family Partnership program, recommends to expectant dads, “Never stop working for what you feel your family deserves. You got to find a balance, because you don’t want to miss everything your child does. You want to be able to be there when your child does those momentous first things. Set goals and make sure you achieve them. Don’t think everything falls into place for you. You got to work for it.”

Eddie has achieved what he said he would do in the past year, after his family was in crisis. When his wife Cora gave birth to their daughter Emma, they were both in jail for using heroin. They had both relapsed, just weeks before her birth.

Emma was born showing symptoms of withdrawal and stayed an extra week in the hospital so she could be monitored.

After Eddie was released from jail, he was able to meet his baby girl on the third day of her life in the hospital. When he went to hold her for the first time, he felt overwhelmed, but at his side was his Nurse-Family Partnership nurse Michelle. Eddie stayed at the hospital day and night until it was time to take her home.

His wife Cora could not be there with them. She had given birth two days earlier, and nurse Michelle had pushed hard to get her those first two days in the hospital to bond with her baby before she had to return to jail.

“Ever since Emma was born,” Eddie shared. “Everything turned around.”

Since their relapse in January of 2016, they have stayed clean and have been models of the Sauk County Drug Court. “I made a commitment and signed a contract to stay clean,” he said. “Others have relapsed, but they don’t have a kid, home and car. They have nothing to lose. If I go to jail, I lose it all.”

When Eddie and Cora were released from jail, they were not allowed to live together because they were considered each other’s enablers of addiction. After several months of proving themselves with nurse Michelle’s support, they were granted permission to live together as a family.

Since Emma was born, the family never missed a home visit from nurse Michelle. Michelle was there for them at every step. She supported them with everything from learning what to feed their baby to when a cold was serious enough to go to the doctor, which turned out to be a pneumonia.

Recently at a home visit, Eddie was thankful to learn that Emma had scored very high on a developmental screening. He remarked that her development has been closely monitored, since being born



*The family with nurse Michelle*

addicted. Emma has exceeded expectations and Eddie said has “blown them away.” At 15-months old, Emma loves dancing – bopping up and down – jumping around and running. Eddie shared that she loves to copycat them – repeating their words – and always smiles over a playful game of peek-a-boo.

Eddie and Cora don’t have a lot of family support to help them as new parents. They haven’t introduced their daughter to most of their family. Many members of their family have and still struggle with addiction. Eddie’s mother was in jail for cocaine use at the time of his birth, and Cora’s mother died from a heroin overdose.

“I am most proud that I have broken the family tradition of bringing kids up in a drug-filled home. I don’t want my daughter to see how I was,” said Eddie.

Eddie shared that he started using drugs when he was 9-years old and was on and off different substances throughout his life. He and Cora met when he was 18, she was 17, and have been together for 10 years, married for five years. Drugs was a big part of their past, but they have turned their lives around to give their daughter a very different childhood than what they experienced growing up.

Eddie is also proud that he is working hard to give his daughter and his wife everything they need. After staying clean for several months, he was able to get his old job back maintaining heavy machinery in a cast iron factory. Eddie’s family is now on his private health insurance and he has kept up with his car payments and housing payments.

Nurse Michelle remarks, “Eddie is doing it! He is doing everything he said he would do and others said he couldn’t do.”

***Eddie and Cora are participants in the Nurse-Family Partnership program through the Sauk County Health Department in Baraboo, Wisconsin.***