

MOM SAM

Alone and pregnant after a broken engagement, Sam, 24, worried about caring for a baby.

“Oh boy,” she thought. “What did I get myself into? I have to bathe her on my own and get up in the middle of the night.”

Normal nerves escalated into deep fears when an ultrasound at 20 weeks showed Sam's baby girl had kidney problems that would require surgery after birth.

Thankfully, Sam had ongoing support from a nurse with extensive training. Based in Benson with the Supporting Hands Nurse-Family Partnership program serving rural Minnesota, Karen helped Sam understand her baby's challenges and navigate the complexities of nurturing a sick infant.

Izobel arrived in December.

Then when her baby was just 3-months old, Sam had to fight her way for more than three hours through a blizzard to Children's Hospital in Minneapolis for Izobel's first surgery.

Fortunately, Karen had warned Sam that complications could arise.

“Karen knew better than I did that the surgery was going to be rough on me. She was right,” Sam said.

The first surgery failed and Sam had to take her baby home with a catheter. A second surgery worked, but Sam and Izobel had to endure a third surgery to remove a stent from Izobel's kidney.

Izobel also struggled with vision problems that Karen helped detect early. Izobel was soon wearing an eye patch three hours a day and glasses all day.

“She of course wants to take them off, but she is learning she has to wear them,” Sam said.

Throughout her pregnancy and the first two years of Izobel's life, Karen demystified complex medical procedures, kept a close watch on both Sam and Izobel's health and reassured Izobel that she had everything it took to be a great mom.

Karen also inspired Sam to return to school to become a nurse. Sam was interviewed in 2014 for this story. This Nurse-Family

Partnership agency is implemented by Supporting Hands, a 20-county project in rural Minnesota that provides NFP services to clients in Big Stone, Chippewa, Douglas, Grant, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Pipestone, Pope, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Stevens, Swift, Traverse and Yellow Medicine Counties.

Nurse-Family Partnership in Minnesota is part of a continuum of home visiting programs helping to assist diverse communities throughout the state of Minnesota.

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THIS PROGRAM HAS HELPED ME SO MUCH. KAREN NEVER PUTS ME DOWN OR MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I'M DOING SOMETHING WRONG. WITH KAREN'S HELP, I CAN MAKE GOOD DECISIONS FOR IZOBEL AND ME.

