

MOM TAN'IA

Tan'ia was clearly skeptical.

A sophomore in high school and 17 weeks pregnant, her high school counselor had recommended that she seek the support of a Nurse-Family Partnership® nurse through Healthier Moms and Babies in Fort Wayne, Ind. But she wasn't convinced that was a good idea.

Her mom insisted, though, so Tan'ia went along with the idea. She said she'd give it a chance, if only to placate the adults in her life.

"At that first meeting in March 2019, she was just like 'I'll see where this goes,' " said nurse Donielle.

The family had recently moved to Fort Wayne from Indianapolis. Tan'ia was trying to adjust to a new school and a new doctor and needed to develop a support network from scratch. Her mom wanted her to have as much support as she could get.

"I don't think I was in the right state of mind," Tan'ia said. "I kept taking home pregnancy tests over and over again. I couldn't believe it. My



Tan'ia (shown right) is proud to be Harmony's mom. She says that Harmony (shown left) has lots of spirit and is trying to start walking.

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[NFP NURSE] DONIELLE SAVED MY LIFE.

mom took me to the doctor and when they asked me when my last period was, I lied.

"I was terrified."

And she admits that she was hesitant to open up to nurse Donielle.

"I thought she was going to be all up in my business and that maybe if I tell her the wrong thing, I'll get in trouble," Tan'ia said.

But sometime during the second or third visit, things started to click.

"The stuff she talked to me about made me feel comfortable and I let my guard down," she said. "I let her know what was going on and I opened up to her."

Now, "she says we jive," Donielle said, laughing.

The relationship between Donielle and Tan'ia ultimately was more than counseling, friendship and ordinary nursing support though. It was critical care.

While Tan'ia had a mostly uneventful pregnancy, at 37 weeks, Donielle noticed a change in her blood pressure.

"She had low blood pressure at first," Donielle said, "but I wasn't concerned because she was very fit and healthy.

"But then at my visit on Aug. 1, when she still had three weeks to go, I noticed a change. We were talking about pregnancy danger signs and what



During the pandemic, Tan'ia continues to have visits with nurse Donielle over video conference, known as telehealth.

to expect, and I saw that her blood pressure was 133 over 100.”

Donielle took it three times to verify it and noticed that Tan'ia also had gained 6 pounds since her visit two weeks ago. She asked her if she'd experienced any symptoms of preeclampsia.

“She said, ‘I don't think so,’ but then she said, ‘Do you see that black spot on the wall?’ ”

It was a telltale sign. Changes in vision are a common symptom of preeclampsia.

They called Tan'ia's doctor, but couldn't get through, so Donielle called the nurse. She said that Tan'ia's baseline blood pressure was very low, so the otherwise innocent-looking spike was actually a serious danger sign.

“If Tan'ia had called herself, they would have said it was no problem, that the blood pressure was OK,” said Donielle. “I pushed further with the nurse and I said they needed to see her today, so they said we should go ahead and send her to labor and delivery.”

Tan'ia's blood pressure kept rising and she ended up having the baby the next day.

“It was such a near-miss,” Donielle recalled.

Tan'ia admits she was rattled.

“Scary is not even the word. Everything happened so fast. They kept drawing blood and then they came in and said, ‘You're going to have the baby today.’ ”

“My mom was there for me the whole time,” she said. “She just kept saying, ‘You're going to be OK.’ ”

Harmony was 5 pounds, 10 ounces at birth and “perfect,” said Tan'ia.

“Not all babies are cute, but she was beautiful.”

Now Harmony is 10 months old crawling everywhere, babbling and trying to walk.

“She's fun baby,” Tan'ia said. “She's very sweet and has lots of spirit.”

Tan'ia lives with her mom. She is working in a nursing home and finished the school year online. She will be a senior in the fall and then hopes to go on to college.

“I'd like to deliver babies,” she said. “I'd like to be a doctor.”

Donielle said that Tan'ia is “more forward-thinking than most young moms. She's very mature and interactive in our visits. She always is talking about what she can do to have a healthy baby.

“I'm super excited to see how well she's doing.”

Both are grateful that Donielle was there to identify Tan'ia's preeclampsia.

“Donielle saved my life,” Tan'ia said and Donielle doesn't disagree.

“There's no question that the nurse/mom relationship is a game-changer,” said Donielle. “And these kinds of things that save lives will continue to happen as long as Nurse-Family Partnership is here.”