

JANUARY 2023 HONORED ANGEL

John Christopher Lewis

8.1.2022-8.15.2022



John Christopher Lewis was born August 1, 2022 and died August 15, 2022.

On the morning of August 1st, I woke up to my water breaking; I was 39 weeks and 3 days, so this was exciting news. I called my midwife, got some breakfast, and then headed back to bed to try to rest through contractions. My midwife stopped by on her way home from another birth, just to check in, but ended up never leaving- contractions were coming quick and intense. She called my doula and had her come over as soon as possible. Things were really progressing.

Labor was going great, John was sounding perfect, everything seemed to be going well. I started to get the urge to push, so I tried pushing while in the water.

There was no progress and after a quick check, we realized my cervix was swollen. I got out of the tub and did a few different position changes to help get John's head off of my cervix. Now the contractions really picked up and I just didn't think I could continue with the back labor and not knowing how long we would have to wait for the swelling to go down. We decided to do a hospital transfer, an hour drive, so I could get some relief.

While everyone was working on getting things packed up and ready to go, I started having the urge to push again. My midwife checked again and the swelling had gone down and I was almost complete, maybe an hour and half after finding out about the swollen cervix. We ended up staying put and I started pushing again. I kept thinking, this is really going to happen, he's going to be born here, it's going to work out.

After just over one and a half hours of pushing, and John still sounding fantastic on the doppler, John's head starts crowning. A few more pushes and his head is delivered, a double nuchal cord present, but quickly relieved. And then he's stuck, a shoulder dystocia. We work quickly flipping around and trying different positions to get him out, but he's really stuck. Finally, after about 4 minutes, the midwives get one arm out, then the other and then his body. They laid him on my chest, lifeless, no heartbeat. They immediately work on resuscitating him and get his heartbeat back- the heartbeat that had been beating so strongly throughout the entire labor and pushing.

John and I are both taken by ambulance to the local hospital. He's still unresponsive. He's intubated and taken to the NICU. After 3 days, John and I are transported, by helicopter, to Children's National in DC. At 7 days of life, they do an MRI on his brain and give us the devastating news that he's brain dead. They give us as much time as we need. Our family came to meet John, our other 2 children came to meet their brother and we just got to hold him and be with him for the whole week.

On August 15th, we made the hard decision to extubate. John passed in my arms a few minutes after removing the tube. We miss John so, so much each and every day. His brother, Leland, and sister, Kinsley, never got to hold him.

We received the Laken sloth weighted angel a couple of weeks later. What a joy it was to open the package and pull out a 9lb weighted angel, John was 9lbs 5oz when he was born. Kinsley and Leland immediately got to hold the sloth and were finally able to feel how much their little brother weighed. We all fell in love with Laken the sloth and hold him almost every day- a small reminder of the little brother and son that we'll meet again in heaven one day.