

Bianca's transplant journey

Video	Audio
Opening presents nats	As she opens her presents, Bianca Gozola is able to forget ...
Bianca Gozola nats	"Mommy!"
	... at least for a little while, all that she's been through.
Nick Gozola nats	"She liked that. They both liked it at the hospital."
Bianca Gozola opening presents nats	"It's a Gabby's Playhouse Doll!"
Nick Gozola nats	"A Gabby's Playhouse Doll?"
	This is a Christmas story years in the making.
Nick & Laura Gozola Bianca's Parents	"And we were playing outside with neighbors who were a little bit older, but generally, you know, other small children. And I kind of looked around and everybody was bundled up the same, you know, hats, mittens, coats, whatever. But her lips were blue. And I was like, 'You guys see this, right? Like, why is she blue and nobody else is?'"

	<p>Bianca's mom, Laura, says subsequent visits to the pediatrician and to a heart specialist revealed that Bianca had restrictive cardiomyopathy. That's where the heart's pumping ability is limited because the muscle doesn't relax normally. Bianca would need a heart transplant.</p>
Nats emotional pause	
	<p>Laura and husband, Nick, were now, as they put it, now heart parents, starting what they knew could be a very long journey. For two years, life was as normal as it could be with a daughter who needed a new heart. But it was in early 2022 that the journey takes a precipitous turn.</p>
Laura Gozola	<p>"And we're both just like, 'It's just a cough.' Little did we know it was a heart failure cough. And that's the cough that is very obvious signs to those who know, that that's actually your heart failing."</p>

	<p>It was at that point that the Gozolas were referred to Mayo Clinic and Dr. Rebecca Ameduri. It's also where their journey takes a detour.</p>
<p>Rebecca Ameduri, M.D. Pediatric Cardiology Mayo Clinic</p>	<p>"Sometimes with restrictive cardiomyopathy, the pressures in the lungs get very high, something called pulmonary hypertension. And because the heart is stiff and doesn't relax normally, you kind of get a backup of pressure into the lungs, and you get this pulmonary hypertension. And because of how high her pressures were and how severe it was, we couldn't go straight to heart transplantation."</p>
	<p>Bianca was admitted to the hospital that day. Dr. Ameduri and the team at Mayo began working to get Bianca's pressures down. Just how dire the situation became clear one day when Laura was called to Bianca's room.</p>
<p>Laura Gozola</p>	<p>"There was probably, I don't even know, 25 people in her room ... flurry of activity ... crash cart was at the end of her bed. And they had paddled her once. And I had to</p>

	<p>watch her get paddled a second time. But then she was safe for another little bit."</p>
	<p>To help Bianca's heart function and lower her lung pressure, she was connected to a biventricular assist device, or BIVAD. Slowly, surely, the efforts began to pay off. She was added to the transplant list, and in September, six months after being admitted to the hospital, Bianca received a new heart. Then just before Thanksgiving, Bianca was discharged and for the first time in 8 months, she headed home ...</p>
Car nats	"That's our house ... Yay! Yay!"
	... home for the holidays.
Laura Gozola	"I think for both of us, we had a hard time coming up with well, what do we want for Christmas? Because the things that we wanted couldn't be wrapped, you know, under the tree. But I think sitting there at Christmas morning with our kids opening presents and the five of us at home ... yeah."

<p>Laura Gozola</p>	<p>"I think for us, that's really the the miracle of going home for Christmas. And being home was like the first step towards the rest of our lives."</p>
<p>Bianca appointment nats</p>	<p>"Can you hold it?"</p>
	<p>The days and weeks since have been filled with follow-up appointments. And while there are still challenges, Dr. Ameduri is optimistic about Bianca's future.</p>
<p>Dr. Rebecca Ameduri</p>	<p>"When we transplant children that are her age, the average lifespan of that transplanted heart is about 20 years. However, the field of heart transplantation is only about 40 years old. So, if we get 20 years out, who knows what we will have to offer her 20 years down the line."</p>
<p>Nats kissing</p>	<p>For Nick and Laura, this entire journey of being heart parents has given them a unique perspective.</p>
<p>Laura Gozola</p>	<p>"I mean, after you've going through what we've been through, we hear the tantrums and most parents, of course, that's, you know,</p>

	nails on a chalkboard. But for us, it's, like, listen to those healthy lungs ... yeah ... that she can do that because she couldn't for the longest time. She could barely talk. So having the lung capacity and the healthy lungs and a healthy heart ... to be able to scream is amazing. It's a miracle in and of itself."
Laura Gozola nats	"Come on cutie ..."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network ...
Laura and Bianca bye-bye nats	"... can you say bye-bye? Bye-bye ... bye-bye."
	... I'm Joel Streed.
Laura Gozola nats	"Thank you."