

# Family trying to add to the miracle of life

They're hoping prayers, treatment will help their child who nearly drowned

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**HUGHSON** — One month ago, Shantelle Taylor had typical toddler priorities. The curly-haired girl opened every cabinet door in sight, yelled "No!" loud and often, and enjoyed outrunning Mom and Grandma.

Now Shantelle is confined to either a bed or a loved one's arms. The 16-month-old can no longer run or talk. Her each and every movement is a miracle to her family members.

So is the fact that she is alive.

On the afternoon of Sept. 10, Shantelle's father, uncle and grandmother lost track of her as they unpacked boxes of belongings in their new Hughson home, shared by Shantelle's parents and grandparents and her older brother, Micah, 2.

Jerry Taylor recalled suddenly realizing that the house was "too quiet," so he began hollering for his daughter.

Shantelle's uncle Ray Edwards went into the back yard to find her floating face-down in the swimming pool, underneath her favorite pool toy.

Taylor, 25, and Edwards, 29, pulled her limp body from the water and im-

mediately started cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Shantelle's heart had stopped. Paramedics arrived within minutes, and Shantelle had a weak pulse by the time a helicopter whisked her to Memorial Medical Center in Modesto.

There, as doctors worked on Shantelle, her grandmother, Amelia Wimmer, 46, and mother, Elishia Taylor, 19, laid hands on her and prayed.

"We believe that God's miracles touch lives," Wimmer said. "The first miracle is that we were at a hospital and not a funeral."

It was the first of four hospitals that Shantelle journeyed through as her family waited and prayed for her to regain consciousness. Day by day, "life started coming back to her," Wimmer recalled.

First her eyes opened, then her toes moved. Piece by piece, her body started waking up again, Wimmer said, the right side first, then the left.

Now Shantelle can focus her gaze and seems somewhat aware of her surroundings. Much of the time, she cries and kicks, and appears agitated, Wimmer said.

And every day Shantelle goes into a pressurized chamber, filled with pure oxygen — to undergo what is called hyperbaric treatment.

For now, it is unclear whether insurance will pay for the treatment. But Shantelle's family decided to go ahead anyway, at a cost of \$175 a day.



ADRIAN MENDOZA/THE BEE

**Hughson residents Jerry and Elishia Taylor with their children, Micah, 2, and Shantelle, 16 months, who was found floating face down in the family pool Sept. 10.**

Shantelle's uncle Josh Arellano, 28, found out about the hyperbaric treatment by searching the Internet.

Ed Nemeth, who runs the Hyperbaric Oxygen Clinic in Sacramento, explained his belief that high doses of oxy-

gen can revive "dormant cells" in damaged sections of the brain.

The treatment is widely prescribed in hospitals to help speed the healing of burns and other external wounds. But doubt persists among many doctors

about whether hyperbaric treatment can remedy brain injury.

Nemeth said a traumatized brain benefits from increased oxygen, because strokes, near drownings and severe head injuries cut off oxygen and blood flow to the brain.

Dr. Barry Tharp, chief of child neurology for the medical school at the University of California at Davis, said no reputable research confirms that hyperbaric treatments help heal brain injury.

Tharp said children often recover from brain injuries better than adults because younger brains are still developing. However, Tharp said, increased oxygen levels can possibly reduce brain swelling immediately after head injury.

Shantelle's family has hope. Her parents stay by her side in the Sacramento clinic.

Shantelle's father and grandfather, the breadwinners of the household, said they are working extra shifts to pay for Shantelle's oxygen chamber treatments. Taylor is a grocery store dairy manager, and Robert Wimmer is a truck driver.

"You don't know until you try something," Taylor said, cradling his daughter after her first half-hour in the oxygen chamber. "We're going to do everything we can for her."

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