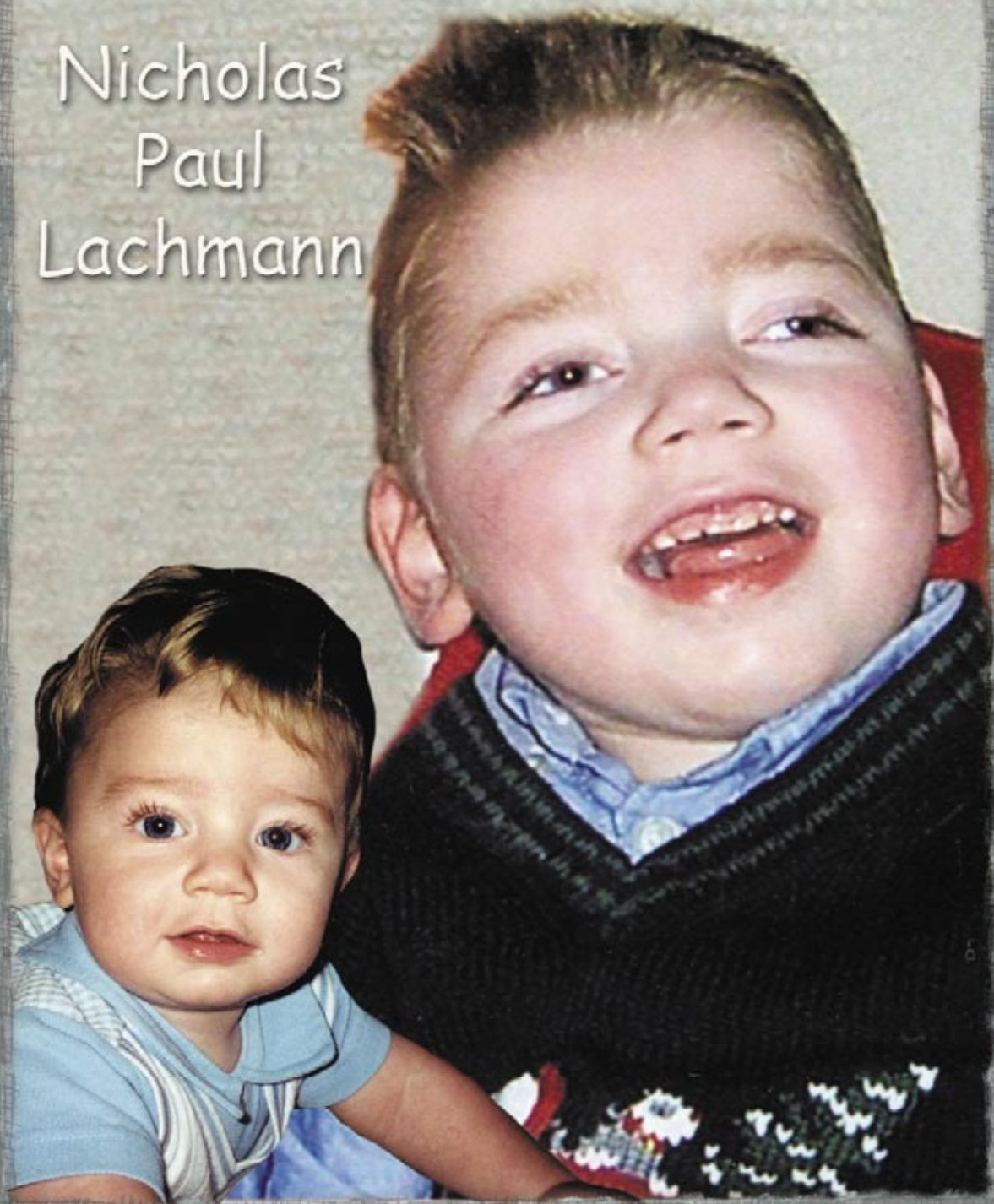


Nicholas  
Paul  
Lachmann



## Nicholas' Life Story

How precious life is. Whether we are granted many years or a few, each one is a blessed part of God's great plan. This story is about a very special part of that plan, the life of Nicholas

Paul Lachman. It is a story of tragedy and triumph, but most of all it is the story of the family who loved Nicholas Lachmann with all their heart.

Our story starts on one of the beautiful sandy beaches in Michigan. Kathleen Wittkopp and Paul Lachmann were both avid volleyball players - Kathy even called it an obsession. Both were very much involved in the Beach Volley Ball Leagues in the West Michigan and Great Lakes area. In the early 1990's they traveled and played in tournaments from Traverse City to Cleveland. Sharing time together during games soon led to a friendship. Kathy and Paul dated for three years, the friendship became love and the two were married in 1995.

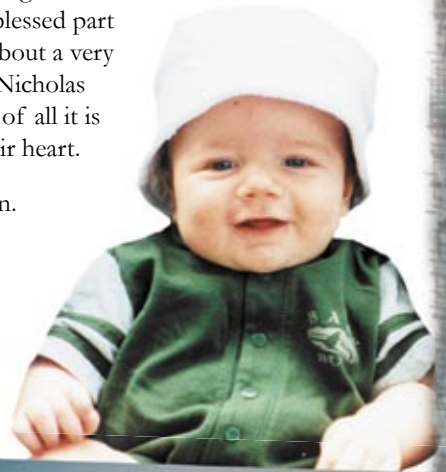
Both had attended Michigan State University. Kathy worked at Huntington Bank as a Branch Manager and a Loan Officer. While at MSU, Paul had studied landscaping and turf management and was employed at Herman Miller in Grand Haven as their Grounds Keeper. In spite of their busy schedules, the young couple continued to play volleyball and started making plans for a family.

In 1997, their wish came true with the birth of their daughter, Emily. However, Emily had decided to come into this world ahead of time and was born five weeks premature. It was a frightening and tenuous time for

Kathy and Paul. Baby Emily spent her

first ten days in an incubator at Spectrum Health in Grand Rapids, with her mom and dad close by her side. When Emily was finally able to come home, Kathy and Paul thought the worst was behind them. Emily continued to grow and blossom and today is a tall, healthy, beautiful girl and smart as a whip.

Kathy went back to work at the bank, while she and Paul thought about having another child. They were blessed again when, on March 27, 2000, Kathy gave birth to a beautiful baby boy they named Nicholas, which means "victory". This time everything went as planned and Nicholas, a smiley, happy, content baby, went home to join his sister. Kathy and Paul considered themselves to be the luckiest people on earth.





After 12 weeks off for maternity leave, Kathy once again went back to work. Being the only girl on her side of the family, Kathy had both sets of grandparents and many aunts and uncles in the area who loved taking care of Emily and Nick when the need arose. On a day-to-day basis, Emily was in preschool and Nick went to day care, the same day care where Emily had attended.

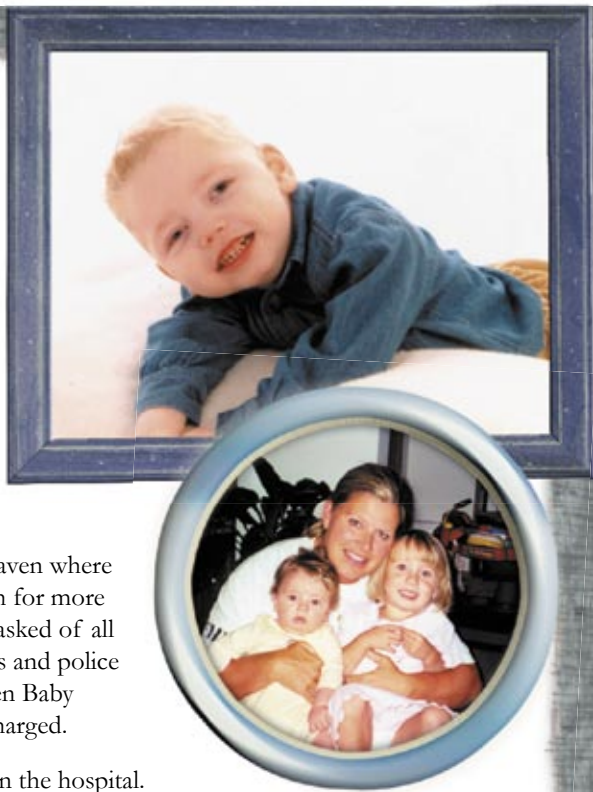
Thinking that Emily's birth was the worst they would have to endure, all that changed with a phone call on October 18, 2000. A tragic incidence had taken place at the day care - Nick was limp and unresponsive. Paul worked close by and rushed to the day care from work. An ambulance was called and baby Nick was rushed to the hospital in Grand Haven where the family lived, and was then sent to Spectrum Health for more intensive tests. In such situations, many questions are asked of all involved, and after a thorough investigation by doctors and police it was determined that Nicholas was a victim of Shaken Baby Syndrome, and the day care provider was eventually charged.

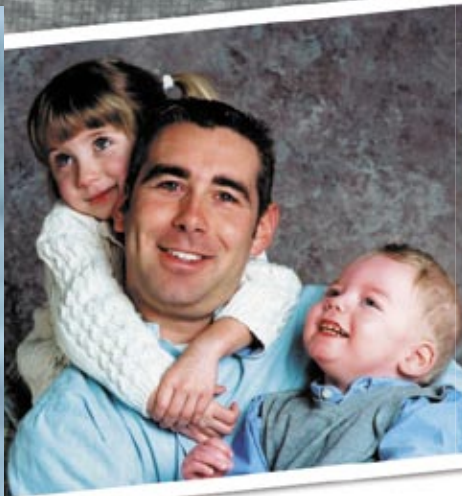
Just seven months old, Nick spent the next 13 weeks in the hospital. Every possible measure was taken to save his life. A feeding tube was put in, a shunt to drain fluid from his brain, and other lifesaving procedures. This precious little angel underwent seven major brain surgeries and, in spite of the medications, was in a great deal of pain. Everyone, including the doctors and his family, were sure young Nicholas would not survive.

But God had other plans for Nicholas and his family. He survived the surgeries and the pain, but was then given just six months to live. Kathy and Paul were determined to do all they could for their little boy, and along with other family members, their church family and their own personal faith, they greeted each new day as a success. After almost a year from when the incident took place, everyone's prayers were answered - Nicholas began to respond.

His sweet smile and little laugh brightened the hearts of all around him. When someone entered the room, he would turn to see who it was. Since Nicholas was so young, each family member had a special sound they would make, or a special word they would say when they came into the room. Nicholas responded to each and every one. When the sliding door was opened, he immediately knew that someone was coming to see him. Someone who needed to see his infectious smile and the little cowlick in his hair he inherited from his father. It became a family mission - make Nicholas smile and laugh every time you visit - and he rarely disappointed them.

Kathy, Paul, Emily and Nicholas were members of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Muskegon and it was here that Nicholas was baptized as a child of God into the Christian faith on Sunday, May 28, 2000. His sponsors for the sacrament of Holy Baptism were his aunt and uncles, Terri Sharp, Michael Wittkopp,





Jr. and Patrick  
Wittkopp. When he was able, Kathy  
and Paul continued to bring Nicholas to church, where he was  
showered with love and blessings from all the church members.

In the fall of 2001, there was a 2-week trial concerning what had happened to Nicholas. It was an extremely difficult and heartbreaking time for the family. The outcome was not what the family had hoped for and Kathy told friends "There was no justice in the Justice System." But ours is not a justice system, but a legal system, and life must go on.

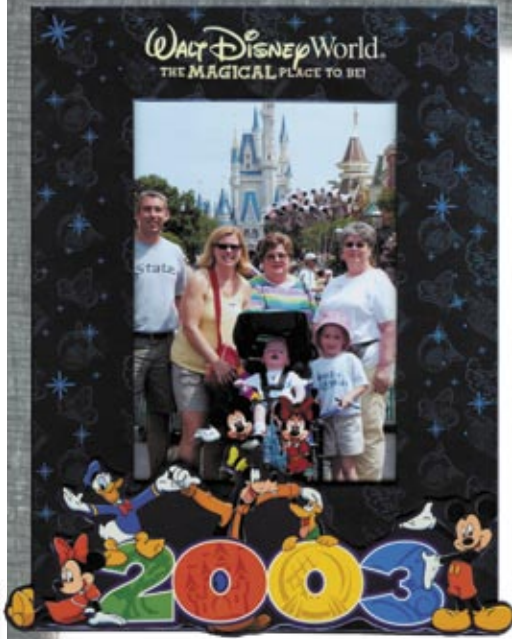
With the trial behind them, Kathy and Paul continued to focus on Emily and Nicholas. Both children were thriving, although each year brought a new set of problems for young Nicholas. He still could not walk or talk and his hips were not developing fully, which caused more difficulties. Because Shaken Baby Syndrome can cause traumatic brain injury, and in spite of his many surgeries, Nicholas's brain continually misfired, sending conflicting messages to his muscles. These "wrong" messages caused the muscles to spasm. Eventually, the doctors were able to find a medication to control them, bringing Nicholas some peace.

This medication was one of 12 different medications Nicholas took each and every day. Needing round-the-clock care, Kathy left her job at the bank to spend her time caring for her little boy. Kathy was determined to keep the schedule that Nicholas required and always made sure that things happened exactly when, and as, they should. Even Emily helped out. She would accompany her mother and brother on all the trips and doctor visits, doing as much as a little girl could to help her baby brother.

Nicholas was soon able to attend the Ottawa Area Center, whose mission is "...to be a leader in providing individualized special education services which maximize our students' quality of life." Nicholas attended several days a week, with Emily often by his side. It was a learning







experience for the whole family. Emily was sure that Nicholas had “neater stuff” at his school than she did at hers. For Paul and Kathy, it was an opportunity to meet the many wonderful caring people who worked at the center and had compassion for what they were going through. This sense of closeness and compassion changed Kathy and Paul’s perceptions and their own sense of compassion.

With things on a relatively smooth course, Kathy decided to go back to school to get her teaching degree, something she had always wanted to do. Paul shared her enthusiasm and he too, began taking classes. They were able to alternate classes and duties at home, along with the help and support of family and friends. Nicholas continued to do well, so Kathy and Paul decided it was time for another baby. Kathy soon became pregnant and while she was pregnant, the Make A Wish Foundation sent the family, including both Grandmas, on a wonderful trip to the “Give Kids The World” resort in Orlando, Florida. This is a great place that caters to special needs children and their families. Nicholas and his family also

visited Disney World where he received the royal treatment. He met and made friends with each of the Disney characters. It was a trip to remember and cherish.

Picking out a name for the new baby was somewhat of a challenge. A girl’s name was easy but when they learned the new child was to be a boy coming up with a name seemed more difficult. A friend, Heather, suggested that they name him Cole so he would be part of “Ni-chol-as”. Baby Cole arrived in October of 2003.

By August of 2005, Nicholas’s health began to worsen. His temperature would drop dramatically, sometimes to as low as 84 degrees. Wrapping him in heated blankets would help and he recovered, but then it would happen again. As the episodes became more frequent, it was decided to bring in the services of Hospice.





Nicholas continued to slip, and even though he had a feeding tube, his body was not taking the nourishment. With family and friends gathered by his side, young Nicholas Paul Lachmann joined Jesus in heaven on Good Friday morning, April 14, 2006. He received eternal life at the age of 6 years and 18 days.

Those who mourn Nicholas' death include his parents Paul and Kathy; his sister Emily Anne and his brother, Cole Michael both at home; grandparents,

Michael and Diane Wittkopp and Richard and Ruth Ann Miller; his aunts and uncles, Terri Sharp, Michael and Michele Wittkopp, Patrick and Lori Wittkopp, Christopher and Kristen Piotrowicz,, Eric and Nicole Sugars; his cousins, Ashley, Kailey, Abigail, Noah, Matthew and Morgan, Katie, Sarah and Jacob, Emma and Max. A service of Christian Burial will be conducted at 3 PM, Tuesday, April 18, 2006, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Norton Shores, with Pastor Mark Zimmerman officiating. Interment is in Lakeshore Cemetery, Grand Haven. Visitation will be Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006 from 6:00-8:00 PM and Monday 2:00-4:00 and 6:00-8:00 PM at Clock Funeral Home, Grand Haven. Please visit Nicholas's personal memory page at [www.lifestorynet](http://www.lifestorynet) to share a memory and sign the online guest book.



Visit [www.lifestorynet.com](http://www.lifestorynet.com) to connect with your friends and family, share stories, and sign the guestbook. Life Story Funeral Homes® are the exclusive providers of the Life Story Experience™.

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