



Publication: Star, The (Early Edition) - Main
Title: 18 free life-changing surgeries
Publish date: 16 Nov 2023
Page: 10

Reach: 25596
AVE:R 66104.48
Author: Shakirah Thebus



MOM Natalie Samuels and 10-month-old Xia from Northpine. Xia received free cleft palate correction surgery from the Smile Foundation. | ARMAND HOUGH Independent Newspapers

SMILE WEEK

18 free life-changing surgeries

SHAKIRAH THEBUS
shakirah.thebus@inl.co.za

EIGHTEEN children will see their lives drastically transformed for the better through free lifesaving surgical procedures, including reconstructive surgeries, at Tygerberg Hospital during Smile Week.

Smile Foundation's Smile Week, sponsored by Adcock Ingram, began on Monday and surgeons will perform free surgeries for conditions such as cleft lip and cleft palate, congenital hand and foot abnormalities, and more complex craniofacial reconstruction.

On Tuesday, Andre Daniels, 10, from Elsie Rivier who was born with Crouzon syndrome, also known as craniofacial dysostosis, a rare genetic disorder affecting the shape of a child's head and face, had his surgery. Children with Crouzon syndrome often

experience complications related to vision, dental and breathing issues, hearing loss and hydrocephalus.

Daniels' mother, Catherine said: "Andre gets bullied a lot by other children. It breaks my heart when they mock him and laugh in his face. He's always asked why his eyes are so big and is called terrible names. Some kids can be very cruel, and this causes Andre to cry a lot.

"Seeing my child struggle like this is hard for me, I have to hide my tears to be strong for him. I always tell him he is a special creation and needs to be brave because things will get better after his operation."

Northpine resident and mother of 10-month-old Xia, Natalie Samuels, said her daughter's cleft condition was noticed after birth. She was referred to the Smile Foundation and corrective surgery was done on July 29.

"It was not an easy journey. I think people can try to prepare you as much as possible in the beginning, but they can't really prepare you for post-operative care and they can't prepare you for going into the recovery room to fetch your child. It feels like you're going to fetch a different child.

"So I think it was traumatic for myself and for Xia because she was used to having this wide mouth. She was bilateral affected so seeing this different child and her trying to cry but she can't open up her mouth ..."

Samuels thanked the Smile Foundation, hospital staff, and everyone else involved in facilitating the surgery.

Tygerberg Hospital head of Plastic Surgery, Professor Nick Kairinos said surgeons perform the cases free of charge. Smile Foundation's Moira Gerszt said more surgeries would possibly be added this week.