



MEET THE FRISCIA FAMILY



Miracle Hero

Todd, Julie, Lily and
Chicco

Miracle Hero Tony

If you spotted Julie Friscia her husband Todd, and their daughter Lily, you probably wouldn't pay much attention to the small, monkey rattle Lily is carrying. At second glance, you may think that it's an odd choice for an 8-year-old girl. But that toy, named Chicco, holds powerful meaning for Lily and her family.

Chicco represents the brother Lily never met. Chicco was the favorite toy of Tony Friscia who passed away before Lily was born. Lily and her parents carry Chicco on every family vacation as a tangible reminder of Tony and what would have been their life as a family of four.

On a rainy day in May 2012, the Friscia family was traveling on Interstate 81 near Carlisle, PA. Julie was in the back seat along with 6-month-old Tony. Another vehicle tried to merge too close to the Friscia's car. Todd swerved to avoid impact, and the family's car jolted off the road and slammed into a tree. Julie doesn't remember what happened after that.

Todd does, and it was horrific. Everyone was badly hurt including a family friend who was also in the car. Todd could hear Tony crying. "It wasn't his normal cry," Todd remembers. Todd struggled to free himself and stumbled out the car window. Within minutes, Penn State Health Life Lion was on the scene, transporting Tony via helicopter and everyone else via ambulance to Penn State Health Milton S. Hershey Medical Center.



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Surgeons did their best to reduce the swelling on Tony's brain, but the injuries were too severe. When Julie's memories resumed, they were heartbreaking. She remembers Dr. Scott Halstead, in tears, saying he was sorry. There was no way to save their son. The Friscias also remember the moment they walked alongside Tony's hospital bed for his final surgery to donate his organs. "When we got to the double doors, he kept going, and we stopped," says Julie. "We knew we were never going to see him again."

Now the Friscias live with memories of Tony – his ginormous blue eyes, the hand and footprints the medical staff helped to encase in plaster, and the knowledge that two people benefited from Tony's donated heart, kidneys and liver. And of course, Chicco. The current Chicco is jokingly called "Fake Chicco." The original was lost in the accident wreckage. But Julie buys replicas of the toy whenever she sees them at yard sales. She now has three.

Tony's Legacy

While the Friscias have every right to be angry about their loss, they continuously choose grace. "If anyone could have saved him, it would have been the team at Hershey," Todd says. "We feel confident he got the best chance." Julie adds, "We know more than anybody how important it is to raise money to help kids. Why wouldn't we do that? Why doesn't everybody?"

Julie has been raising money for Children's Miracle Network since she was in college. Her father, Jim Parsons, works at Universal Media-Analytics, a longtime corporate partner of Children's Miracle Network. After Tony's passing, Julie's parents started an annual golf outing in his memory, raising \$136,300 so far.

Unbreakable Bond

Fifteen months after Tony died, Lily was born. She's now a talented gymnast who practices up to four hours a day. She proudly holds Chicco in family photos and talks often about her brother. Lily's baby picture hangs in the Friscia's living room alongside Tony's. Julie says she's sad that Tony's photos will never age so she's decided not to update Lily's baby photo in that spot either. Two photos of her two babies – a family of four.



Each Memorial Day, Lily takes a photo with her brother's picture.

Miracle Hero Program

In 2021, Children's Miracle Network launched an extension of the Miracle Family ambassador program called Miracle Heroes to honor children who have passed but continue to inspire.

Donations to Children's Miracle Network at Penn State Health Children's Hospital support programs like Child Life, Music Therapy and the Hummingbird Program which help families during the end-of-life journey. Child Life helps families make keepsake feet and handprints. Music Therapists can record a child's heartbeat to a favorite song, and the Hummingbird Team advocates for the family's wishes and provides coordinated social, psychological and clinical support.

To learn more and give, visit CMNHershey.org.



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