

LITTLE AUSSIE MIRACLES

COURAGEOUS KIDNEY TOT

As a 2-year-old, Roman Ellul was obsessed with the beach – but heartbreakingly, his condition meant going there was fraught with difficulty.

Roman was born with a kidney problem that required seven to 12 hours dialysis every night, and he had a tube directly into his belly for the treatment. This needed to be kept completely dry.

“All Roman wanted to do was watch the waves, but it was too risky,” says his mum Ellen, from Blackwood, SA. “There were so many things we couldn’t do. I was constantly telling him to be careful of his belly tube.”

By age 3, Roman’s immunity was so low, he was in desperate need of a kidney transplant. Ellen and her husband, Jamie, faced an agonising wait – but the call finally came in April 2017.

“When we told Roman his kidney was waiting at the hospital, he asked if it was going to be a blue one – thinking he could choose the colour!” recalls Ellen. “I said it would be a healthy pink!”

Luckily, he didn’t seem to mind, and his body was very grateful for the new organ. When surgeons connected the new kidney, Roman urinated for the first time in three years. Such a small thing was monumental for Roman and his family. The transplant had changed his life.

Then, on Christmas Day, Roman’s one wish came true.

“He wanted to find seashells and build sea castles at the beach,” says Ellen. “I cried watching him walk along the beach for the first time.”

Since his transplant, Roman, now 8, is doing very well. Even better, he can go to the beach whenever he likes.

THESE BRAVE PINT-SIZED BATTLEERS HAVE BEEN THROUGH MORE THAN MOST ADULTS – BUT THEY’VE ALL BEATEN THE ODDS!



Gorgeous Roman is fighting fit nowadays.



SMILING STROKE SURVIVOR

Georgia Peacock cheated death twice before she turned 1.

At 11 months old, the bub, from Melbourne, VIC, suffered a burst brain aneurysm, which led to a brain bleed. Rushed to hospital and into surgery, Georgia miraculously survived the operation in which surgeons

removed part of her skull and put it in the freezer for three months until the swelling in her brain had reduced enough to replace it.

But before her parents, Kim and Tony, could breathe a sigh of relief, Georgia was at death’s door again suffering a stroke.

“We could have lost her, twice, within three weeks, but she defied all odds,” Kim tells New Idea.

Despite surviving, Georgia’s initial prognosis didn’t look good.

“The left side of her brain was severely damaged afterwards and doctors didn’t know if she would ever talk or be able to communicate,” Kim remembers. “Her face dropped, her tongue didn’t move, and her right arm and leg were paralysed.”

But Tony and Kim were



Little Georgia had a brain aneurysm and stroke, but beat the odds.

undeterred and started teaching Georgia sign language, devoting themselves to their daughter’s rehabilitation through physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Six months later, and to her doctors’ amazement, Georgia was walking and talking.

Now, Georgia is dancing and singing like any regular kid. She still wears a leg brace on her right leg and suffers weakness on the right side of her body, but she doesn’t let that stop her. If she can get through what happened to her in the first year of her life, the bubbly girl can do anything!



A MIRACLE BOY – INSIDE AND OUT

Sam Gellie, from Melbourne, VIC, has become known as a “miracle child” after he survived life-changing surgery to tuck his vital organs back inside his body.

The 7-year-old was born with a rare condition called omphalocele. It meant his liver, spleen and parts of his bowel were outside his body. Babies rarely survive and Sam had to wait six years with his organs like this before having surgery.

“It was a miracle he survived birth and lived with the organs outside his body, and a miracle he’s doing well after surgery,” his mum, Amy, tells New Idea.

Before the surgery, Sam’s organs were all inside a thin membrane, which was attached to his abdomen.

Even with this ‘bump’ that was kept in place with the use of a compression bandage, he didn’t stop living his life.

Then in 2020, surgeons started putting Sam’s organs into his tiny body.

In an Aussie first, Sam had four tissue expanders inserted inside his abdomen that acted like balloons and were delicately inflated over six months. This created the space for the organs to be tucked back in.

The surgery was a success and Sam is now living with his organs where they are meant to be.

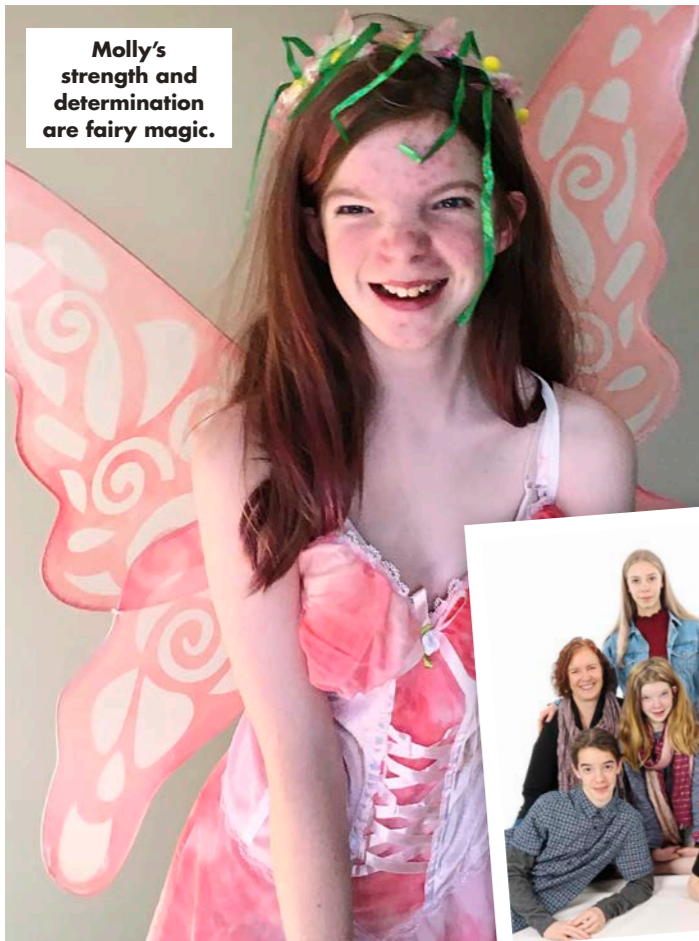
“He shouldn’t have survived,” says Amy, still incredulous. “His life is a bookend of miracles.”



Sam was an Aussie first for his life-changing surgery.



Molly's strength and determination are fairy magic.



FIGHTING FAIRY

Molly Davey was used to hospitals, having been in and out of them throughout her short life.

At 5 years old, the tot was diagnosed with a chromosome condition so rare that it didn't even have a name. On top of that, she also had epilepsy.

"Thankfully, medication kept her conditions under control and she made some good friends at school," says Molly's mum, Bec.

She also loved fairies, and her world of fairy pretend kept her going when things got on top of her.

But when Molly was 9, Bec and her husband, Geoff, noticed her epilepsy was getting worse.

"She was becoming increasingly tired and had trouble

walking. My back ached from carrying her around all the time," Bec remembers.

Then, one day, Bec and Molly, from Murrumbateman, NSW, were in the kitchen when Molly turned white and dropped to the floor.

Racing her to hospital, doctors discovered the worst. Molly had a cyst on her brain that needed surgery. Although it was benign, it was squashing her brain.

It took six agonising operations to remove the cyst and, despite her parents' fears she wouldn't survive, she bounced back remarkably quickly.

"When we got home, she couldn't wait to play fairies," says Bec. "She told me she wanted to be a fairy when she grew up."

Now 14, Molly's strength and determination are fairy magic in themselves.

"Some might call it magic, others might say it's Molly's courage, but I couldn't be more proud of my daughter," says Bec.



MENINGITIS MARVEL

Jazmyn Parker is lucky to be alive, after a tiny heat rash-like spot on her chest turned out to be something far more deadly.

Within 13 hours, the then 3-year-old Jazmyn contracted a killer strain of meningitis, meningococcal B.

"It was hell – first doctors fought to slow down the spreading infection, as dark spots continued to spring up all over Jazmyn's body," her mum, Sarah, remembers.

Incredibly, Jazmyn did survive, but her battle was far from over.

"She had to undergo more than 15 skin grafts, where doctors moved skin from her upper thigh to cover the deep marks the meningococcal had left behind," Sarah, from Renmark, SA, tells New Idea.

The brave toddler also battled with ongoing leg and foot pain, as well as chronic headaches and



Jazmyn had to undergo more than 15 skin grafts.

Visit: makeawish.org.au

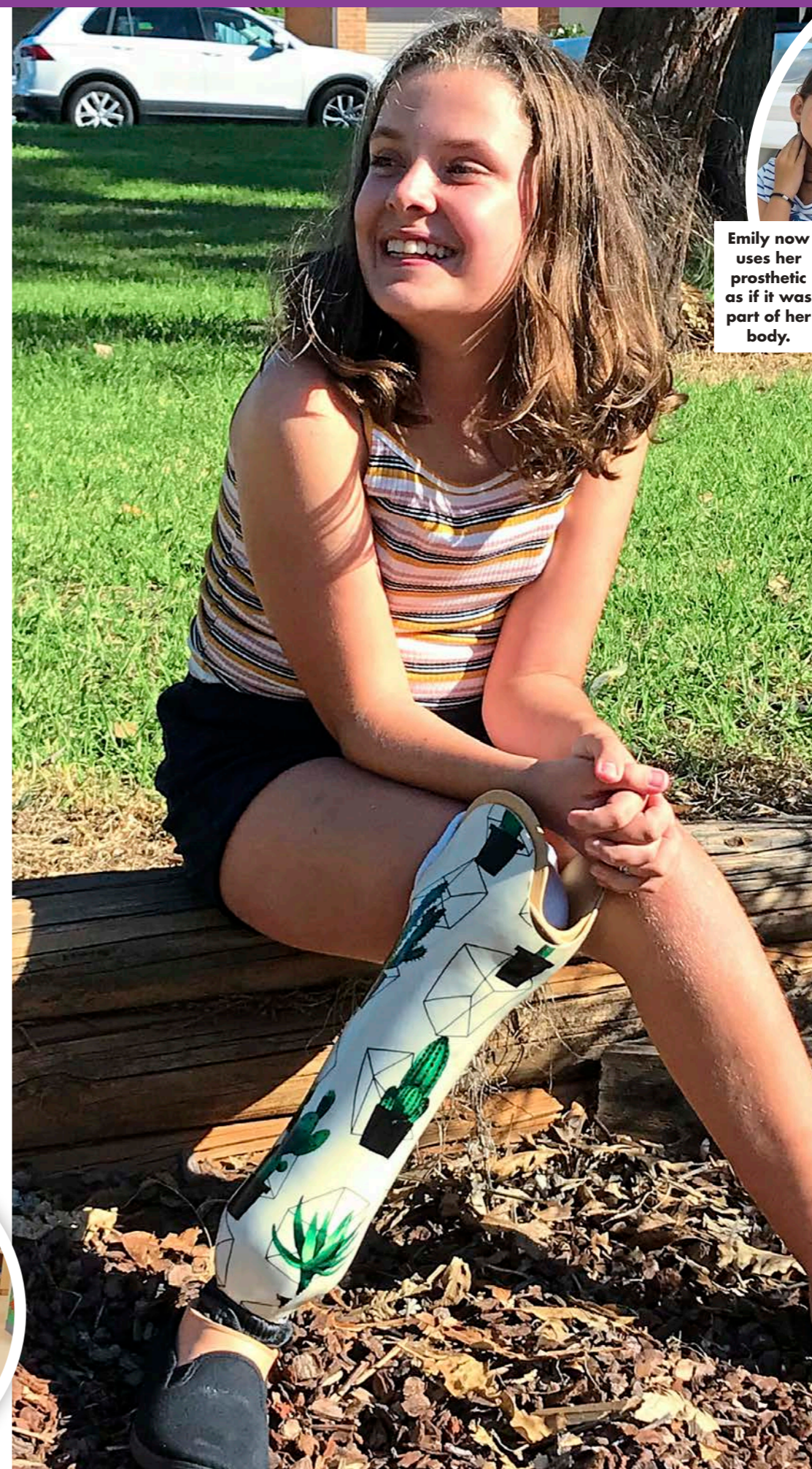
fatigue, resulting from the neurological nerve damage.

Her only relief was in the water, so Jazmyn started pretending to be a mermaid! She was thrilled in 2019 when she got to meet a real-life mermaid through Make-A-Wish Australia.

Jazmyn is now 8 years old,

and she and her family want to alert other parents to the warning signs of meningococcal.

"Jazmyn sometimes wishes her legs were normal and she didn't have scars, but I believe things happen for a reason. She could have died, but she didn't. She's our trooper," says Sarah.



Emily now uses her prosthetic as if it was part of her body.



AMPUTEE AT SIX

Emily Kirkpatrick was just 6 years old when her parents were faced with the most daunting decision of their lives. They had to give the go-ahead for their daughter to have her lower right leg amputated.

Emily, who is now 13, was born with Neurofibromatosis type 1, a genetic condition that can cause tumours to grow along nerves in the skin, brain and other parts of the body. Emily had a tumour on her shin bone, which meant from the age of 10 months she needed leg braces and a walking frame.

Even after surgery and continuous treatments, Emily was in pain.

"She mostly sat for six years of her life, and that was not a life for a child," says mum Sharon.

Although a seemingly drastic option, amputation and a prosthetic leg meant Emily would be able to walk independently for the first time – and it turned out to be amazingly successful. Within months, Emily was balancing and using her prosthetic as if it was part of her body.

Now seven years on, the teenager, from Port Macquarie, NSW, runs, swims, and even plays baseball and touch footy.

"It's not a normal leg – she suffers pains, walking long distance is hard and she needs a new leg every six to nine months until she is an adult, but nothing gets her down," says Sharon, proudly. "She is such a kind and caring girl, who has a smile no matter what. She is a fighter."

Visit: makeawish.org.au