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Paramedics deliver ‘driveway baby’ when Michigan mom can’t make it to hospital

Updated Aug 14, 2020; Posted Aug 14, 2020



Russell Thumser Jr. was born in a Jackson Community Ambulance that was parked in his parents' Jackson driveway on Aug. 10, 2020.

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JACKSON COUNTY, MI – Labor for Kristy Thumser’s first five children took a while, so she assumed her sixth child would be the same.

The baby had a different idea.

Thumser ended up giving birth to a son in an ambulance parked in her Jackson County driveway on Monday, Aug. 10, because there wasn’t time to get to the hospital.

“I didn’t want to have a driveway baby,” she said. “I was just totally freaked out. You hear of these things happening, but you never think it’s going to happen to you.”

Thumser was at Henry Ford Allegiance Health on Sunday, Aug. 9, ready to deliver the baby. But she left around 10:30 p.m. because, although she was having contractions, other signs showed the baby wasn't quite ready to come yet.

By 1:30 a.m. the next day, her contractions had intensified. Still, Thumser said she and her husband Russell didn't rush back to the hospital because her previous labors had taken a while.

But, when she got sick in the yard as they were leaving, Thumer knew they wouldn't make it in time. They called 911.

“(When the ambulance arrived) I was like, ‘Come on, you got to hurry up,’” Thumser said. “... Thankfully they got me in the ambulance. It was a matter of minutes.”

When the paramedics examined Thumser, it was time for her to push, paramedic Shannon Coleman said. She gave birth to Russell Thumser Jr. in the ambulance in her driveway at 2:42 a.m.

Neither Coleman, nor her partner had delivered a baby before.

“We see a lot of different things in the ambulance but to deliver a healthy baby, and the mom healthy, it made me feel like I was on cloud nine,” Coleman said. “Everyone was happy. It was just a surreal experience.”

There wasn't time to give Thumser pain medicine and it was her first birth without it, she told Coleman.

“She was a champ, man,” Coleman said. “No pain meds. ... She made it look easy. I know she was in a lot of pain and I know it's not ideal to deliver in the back of an ambulance but she is a champ.”

The paramedics stayed calm throughout the birth, which Thumser said she appreciated.

“It was absolutely amazing how calm they were,” she said. “They were both super giddy because – they're trained for it – but neither one had experienced it.”

Little Russell was seven weeks premature and weighed 4 pounds, 14 ounces. So, he's currently in the neonatal intensive care unit at Henry Ford Allegiance Health,

“He's doing great,” Thumser said. “He's doing really, really well.”