

## MEDICAL

# Bears' Tillman reveals infant's illness

The Associated Press

CHICAGO — Bears cornerback Charles "Peanut" Tillman recalled handing coach Lovie Smith a slip of paper with a doctor's excuse for missing offseason workouts.

"It said, 'To whom it may concern, Charles couldn't be at work because his daughter had to have a heart transplant,'" Tillman recalled.

Tillman has missed assorted training camp practices and offseason workouts, and revealed recently at Children's Memorial Hospital that the reason for his absences was the plight of his infant daughter, Tiana. She had a form of cardiomyopathy in May, which eventually required a heart transplant.

On July 29, six days into training camp, Tiana Tillman became the first person in Illinois to benefit from the use of a device called the Berlin Heart, a small pump located outside the body but connected to the heart. The device is run by a laptop computer and works by helping the right ventricle of the heart pump blood to the lungs, and the left ventricle to pump blood to the body.

It works as a bridge to a transplant and allows those awaiting transplants more time until an organ becomes available.

Tiana, who is now 6 months old, eventually underwent a heart transplant and was released from the hospital Monday.

"By her being on that Berlin Heart, it saved her life," Tillman said. "It bought us more time. You can live on a Berlin Heart over 365 days while we



M. Spencer Green / The Associated Press

Chicago Bears cornerback Charles Tillman speaks about his daughter's cardiomyopathy problems that led up to her being the first patient in Illinois to receive the Berlin Heart during a press conference at Children's Memorial Hos-

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Charles Tillman  
NFL player discussing the need for organ donations and his daughter's illness

family and go from there," Smith said. "We're just glad that it seems like it's going to have a happy ending."

"You talk about real men and being a father and husband, I've had a chance to see him go through a lot of different things, and he just stepped up to the plate."

Tillman called a press conference at the hospital where the surgery was performed for several reasons, including to clear up why he had been missing practices.

"My wife would get on these blog sites and stuff like that, and people were wondering why I wasn't at practice," Tillman said. "Someone said I was getting traded for Brett Favre. One blog said I hit my wife. And one blog said I got arrested for drinking and driving. It was a bunch of crazy stuff."

Tillman also wanted to publicize the Berlin Heart, and he stressed the need for organ donation.

"I think probably the toughest thing that I had to battle with, and I still battle with it now, is that I knew in order for my daughter to live, another kid had to die," Tillman said. "I struggled with it and struggled with it."

"The biggest thing that I got out of it is you're taking something negative and making it into a positive instead of having just two negatives."

He urged everyone to become an organ donor.

"It saved my daughter's life," he said. "One person can save 20 lives."

## Sept. 19 is deadline to enter Surviving to Share

From staff reports

The deadline to enter Redmond Regional Medical Center's Surviving to Share program is drawing near. Stories must be sent in by Sept. 19. Winners will be announced at the Surviving to Share Banquet at the Coosa Country Club on Thursday, Oct. 9 that will honor all participants. Those who entered stories last year, but were not chosen as one of the four winners, are encouraged to enter the contest again this year.

"Redmond Regional Medical Center began this program with the intent to encourage survivors to share their stories of hope and inspiration with others," said Wanda Whitten, director of community relations for Redmond. "The sixth annual Surviving to Share will continue to do so but on a broader scale."

Breast cancer survivors in Northwest Georgia are encouraged to write their story, includ-

ing when they were diagnosed, their treatment timeline, support system, how they feel today and any advice and encouragement they can offer to others facing the same battle.

Participants also are asked to submit a candid photo of themselves and their families.

Three winners and three honorable mentions will be selected. Winners and a guest will receive a two-night getaway package to the historic Barnsley Gardens in Adairsville.

This event is in October each year in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness month. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women today.

Entry forms are available at Redmond Regional, Polk Medical Center, The Hope Center, Cartersville Medical Center, WRGA and online. For additional information, contact Lisa Brown at 706-802-3732 or Jennifer A. Wiggins at 770-607-1017.

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