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# Media Release

## World Prematurity Day 2019: Josh & Lauren Catalano reflect on their miracle Lenny

Friday, 15 November 2019

More than three years on after the extremely premature birth of their second son, Lenny, the experience and emotion is just as vivid for parents Josh and Lauren Catalano. So too is their resolve for a world without heart-breaking stories of babies born too soon.

Lenny Catalano was born in July 2016 at just 24 weeks “en caul” or in the amniotic sac; something that happens in less than one in 80,000 births.

Due to his almost four month premature birth Lenny would weigh just 620g. As part of World Prematurity Day (17 November) the Women & Infants Research Foundation are highlighting incredible stories of premies beating the odds like that of Lenny Catalano.

Fresh off completing yet another gruelling 24-hour cycling challenge at 2019 Telethon Weekend, Josh recalls the rollercoaster ride after of arriving at the hospital for the emergency birth.

“When doctors announced a code-blue pregnancy and told me my boy was on the way, the room started to spin. I was scared for my son, for Lauren, and for our family,” Josh said.

Lauren, meanwhile, was in state of calm she cannot fully explain.

“All I thought about was I need to relax and breathe. There was something which kind of took over me – knowing that if I could be calm then things would go as best as they possibly could for Lenny,” she said.

Soon after the birth, the Catalanos were told to prepare for the worst because Lenny had a stage-four brain bleed. Doctors later revealed they gave Lenny a 30 per cent chance of survival.

“As he has with every challenge, Lenny overcame it. Lauren and I stayed by his side almost 24/7, working in shifts in the belief that our presence would help him grow stronger.”

Following his NICU stay at King Edward Memorial Hospital, Lenny would have to endure a hernia operation at Princess Margaret Hospital. In total, Lenny would spend the first 150 days of his life in the NICU.

The focus of an award winning 2017 short film produced by Josh Cable, ‘Lenny the Lion’ chronicles Lenny’s incredible fighting spirit as too of both Josh and Lauren.

“If you look at Lenny now you don’t see the pain he went through, he’s a beautiful little healthy boy. You wouldn’t believe he was a premature baby,” Josh said.

Keynote speakers at the 2019 Women & Infants Research Foundation’s Spring Gala, Josh and Lauren are working with WIRF to raise awareness and support for the Foundation’s pioneering work into preterm birth prevention.

“Each year, more than 26,000 Australian babies are born too soon – more than 3,000 of these are young Western Australians,” Lauren said.

“Our experience has been the most traumatic chapter in our lives, but ultimately, one that has shaped us and made our family stronger.



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“To know that a program led out of WA by WIRF is providing a proven roadmap to reduce the burden of preterm birth on a global scale is amazing and we’re committed more now than ever to ensure that no other family goes through what we had to.”

### ENDS

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**Background:** The Women & Infants Research Foundation is one of Australia’s leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health of women and infants. We focus our research and programs across three principal areas: the prevention of preterm birth, gynaecological cancers, and women’s mental health. Our research and programs have directly contributed to a number of improved clinical practices and health outcomes.