

FAMILY BENEFITS FROM NEW STATE TESTING THAT IS ALREADY SAVING LIVES

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OPELOUSAS — Laney and Shane Smith of Opelousas have a lot to be thankful for this holiday season. Their new daughter, Macey, is alive and well, thanks to a new state policy that allowed doctors to detect a genetic disorder that would have killed her.

On Nov. 1, Louisiana's state health lab began checking for eight potentially deadly genetic disorders in the blood of all newborns. Macey Smith was the 57th baby to receive the tests and the first to benefit.

Macey tested positive for citrullinemia, a rare genetic disorder that would have killed her within weeks.

"At first, it was so scary," Laney Smith said. "It was overwhelming."

Now, thanks to the tests and prompt action by doctors, Macey is thriving.

According to the Smiths, by all rights, Macey should have died. She was born Oct. 24, a week before the new testing program was to begin.

"Thank God they found it," Laney Smith said. "She wasn't even supposed to be looked at."

Hayward Genetics Center, part of the Tulane University Health Sciences Center, handled Macey's case.

"Just because the state was behind in its work load she was saved," Fran Simon of Tulane's HSC said.

"Otherwise, the baby would have gotten sleepier and sleepier and died."