

Med alum celebrates successful surgery with twins

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When Dr. Kevin Lally celebrated with Emily and Caitlin Copeland on their 18th birthday, he also celebrated one of the most important operations of his career.



Eighteen years ago, the Copeland twins were born joined at the liver and Dr. Kevin Lally separated them when they were 10 months old. They celebrated their 18th birthday with their surgeon. (Photo from the Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital)

A 1980 graduate of the Tulane University [School of Medicine](#), Lally performed the complex surgery that separated the Copeland twins, who were conjoined. Between 40 to 60 percent of conjoined twins are stillborn, and only 35 percent survive. Conjoined at the liver, Emily and Caitlin Copeland beat the odds when surgery successfully separated them when they were 10 months old.

Lally says celebrating the twins' 18th birthday and their selection as co-valedictorians for their high school was unique and very fulfilling.

"You get a lot of positive reinforcement being a physician," says Lally. "But that's hard to beat."

Lally is chair of the Department of Pediatric Surgery at the University of Texas Health Science Center, and the twins' successful surgery was just one of many in his

impressive career as a pediatric surgeon. During a 23-year career at UT, Lally has tripled the size of the pediatric surgery department and expanded research funding and the residency-training program. He has been recognized with the UT President's Award for Mentoring Women, as well as a Teaching Excellence Award and Outstanding Surgical Educator Award.

But Lally credits his time at Tulane School of Medicine with inspiring his interest in surgery and academic medicine.

"My initial exposure to research and surgery, even as a freshman, paved the way to a career which morphed into a passion," says Lally.

Lally considers himself lucky to have the opportunity to help children, like Emily and Caitlin Copeland, every day. Lally will be celebrating his 35th reunion from the School of Medicine this spring.

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