



Staff photo by Chris Horobin

Clarkson author Nicola Maher, centre, has immortalized her family in print in a book entitled *The Tiniest Warrior of All*. Reading along are husband John, twins Henry and Lydia, 10, and Imogen, 2.

Mother writes baby's struggle into fairy tale

Preemie is now tiniest warrior

By KATHARINE SEALEY
Staff Writer

When a healthy baby is born, everyone is quick to share joyful congratulations.

But, when something goes wrong, it can be hard to find words.

When Nicola Maher's third child, Imogen, was born at 29 weeks, weighing less than two pounds, Maher struggled to explain baby sister's life-or-death situation to her then 8-year-old twins.

"Just to make things worse, Imogen was born in the middle of the SARS outbreak, so Henry and Lydia weren't allowed to come to the hospital and didn't understand what was going on with their new baby sister and why she couldn't come home," she said. "I didn't want to lie to them and say she would get better, because there was a very good chance she wouldn't. So, I used to come home every day and tell them fairy stories about her, taking the clinical events of the day and telling it to them in a way they could understand."

Today, Imogen is a feisty 2-year-old and Maher has compiled those 'fairy stories' into a new children's book entitled *The Tiniest Warrior Of All*.

"I hadn't planned on publishing it," she said, "but then I showed it to one Imogen's doctors, whom I made a wiz-

ard in the story, and she totally loved it. She told me there was a need for something like this to help other families.

"I wanted to write it for all the families with children in intensive care, because I know what they are going through."

A serendipitous meeting in a sports store also helped rocket the production along.

"I ran into some friends of ours from Clarkson, Jim and Christa Carroll, and told them about the book," she said. "By totally lucky chance, they said they had just started a small publishing company, Oblio Press, and were looking for books to publish."

Although the book is a fairy tale, it also makes note of the children who don't win their struggles.

"If you lose an adult, people can understand the sense of loss, but if you lose a child, especially early on, they tend to think 'Oh well, you can just have another,'" she said. "But, the loss is just as painful, and that life has to be acknowledged, and I want this book to help open those conversations for families who are grieving."

Maher has donated some of the proceeds from sales of her book to Women's College Hospital, where Imogen was delivered and spent her first four months.

Visit www.tiniestwarrior.com to purchase the book, which costs \$14.95.