

UNBORN

Continued from page 1

tion and asked, "Have you seen this picture of you?"

Julie Armas, Samuel's mother, told the subcommittee that her son is now "an active, walking 3-year-old who attends preschool and is age-appropriate developmentally."

Despite the risks involved in the surgery, she said, she and her husband chose it because, even at 21 weeks' gestation, "Samuel was not a hypothetical, he was already a member of our family, our son, and deserved our best efforts to improve his life."

Samuel's father, Alex Armas, said increased awareness and support of advances in fetal surgery are critical to families and their unborn children.

"Progress in this field is not only improving lives, but is also saving lives by representing an option, an alternative, a hope for parents who may otherwise choose to end their pregnancy," he said. "Having options in fetal surgery can turn a family's initial perception of hopelessness into an outlook of hope and a life where little victories are celebrated and cherished. We have seen living proof of this in our son."

Also testifying before the Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space, chaired by Brownback, was Dr. Jim Thorp, a professor in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Florida in Pensacola and a specialist in maternal fetal medicine who has per-



Michael Clancy/CNS

During an in-womb procedure to correct spina bifida on a 21-week-old fetus, the baby's hand grips the finger of Dr. Joseph P. Bruner in an operating room at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tenn., Aug. 19, 1999. Photographer Michael Clancy captured the remarkable moment for *USA Today*. Since then Clancy has made the photo available to pro-life organizations for brochures, posters and Web sites.

formed more than 250 fetal surgeries.

Thorp quoted from Sir Albert William Liley, who is credited with performing the first fetal surgery in 1963: "From my clinical experience I am convinced that unborn children are individuals and human beings who are capable of receiving and responding to medical care and who should have legal protection."

"It is extremely difficult not to see the fetus as a child before birth with the same value as a child after birth, especially after one sees her smiling, grimacing, moving, sleeping,

yawning, stretching, sucking a thumb, as well as responding to pain from needle sticks," Thorp testified.

Even when their unborn children do not require surgery, some parents are getting a similar view from the detailed color images provided by three-dimensional ultrasound machines, sometimes called 4-D.

Expectant mother Jessica Kasel of Woodbury, Minn., herself a sonographer at Fairview-University Medical Center in Minneapolis, went to Grand View Ultrasound in St. Paul for images of her unborn daughter,

Emma.

"With 2-D, you just get skeletal images," she told *The Catholic Spirit*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. "But with 4-D, you can see the form and the fat cheeks and the features. And you kind of get her personality, too. She was striking a pose for us."

Patty McGinnity and Jane Sieckert, sisters and co-owners of Grand View Ultrasound, said they would like to partner with crisis pregnancy centers.

"At 20 weeks, sometimes women don't really feel pregnant," said McGinnity, a parishioner at St. Gregory the Great in St. Paul. "But to see the baby just makes it so real. If they saw their baby, it would be very difficult for them to abort that child."

"There is little debate about whether the child in utero is alive, but (there is debate) about whether it is a life worthy of protecting," Brownback said at the Senate hearing. "That is a debate we will continue to have and will have another day."

But the focus that day was on Samuel Armas and children like him.

"The ability to treat and cure diseases for the benefit of the young child who is yet to be born is an amazing advance that will help alleviate the suffering of many young children, and in fact, is already doing so," Brownback said. "These are advances that all people, regardless of their political views, can embrace as a positive step."

Contributing to this story was Julie Carroll in St. Paul.

GENERAL

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