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[Levi Hebert](#)

## Couple Seeking Hand Specialist Finds Care in Atlanta

Jared and Erin Hebert started in Louisiana. Then the married couple traveled to Boston. That trip ultimately led them to Atlanta.

The triangle Jared and Erin Hebert carved across the East over the better part of two years was for one reason—to find the best care possible for their son Levi.



"I suppose, as first-time parents, we just assumed that we would have a completely normal and healthy baby," Jared said.

### The Journey Starts

Levi was born Jan. 2, 2012 with symbrachydactyly of his left hand, a congenital condition in which fingers or toes are missing or underdeveloped. In Levi's case, all of the fingers of his left hand were absent. His left thumb was underdeveloped and unstable.

A couple of months after Levi was born, his parents took him to an orthopaedic hand specialist near their home in Louisiana. Their doctor laid out Levi's options to Jared and Erin.

"We began a discussion with him about possible references of pediatric surgeons to perform the procedure once we made a decision," Jared said.

Coincidentally, Jared and Erin were planning a family trip to Boston. Their doctor recommended they speak with a pediatric orthopaedic hand surgeon at Boston Children's Hospital while they were there.

This is how they met Bryce Gillespie, M.D.

### Path to Atlanta

Jared and Erin immediately felt Dr. Gillespie was the right doctor for Levi. During the meeting, however, Dr. Gillespie let them know that he was soon going to be joining the Children's Healthcare of

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Atlanta team. His original plan was to transfer Levi's care to one of his surgical colleagues in Boston.

Jared and Erin had a different plan.

"We had so much faith in Dr. Gillespie," Jared said. "We decided to follow him to Atlanta for Levi's surgery."

The relocation worked out better for the Hebert family because Atlanta is significantly closer to their home in Louisiana. When they arrived at Scottish Rite hospital for the procedure, they discovered that proximity was just one benefit of Children's.

"We were very impressed with the entire staff," Jared said.

"Everyone was great, from Levi's anesthesiologist to his post-surgery nurse and everyone in between."

### A Better Grasp

Dr. Gillespie performed the procedure Nov. 22, 2013. The complex process of reconstructing Levi's hand involved moving a bone from the



underdeveloped index finger into the end of his thumb. Dr. Gillespie also created a deeper web space between Levi's thumb and hand.

Taking these steps allowed Levi to have a strong pinch and to be able to grasp larger objects.

Levi stayed in the city over the weekend with his parents, who took him to the Georgia Aquarium. The family had one last visit with Dr. Gillespie the following Monday before flying home.

Dr. Gillespie stays in contact with the family and their doctor back home. He is able to view pictures, X-rays and even movies by email to monitor Levi's progress.

Levi may need minor surgeries as he grows to increase function. For now, he's enjoying the increased function his hand has and the treats it affords him.

"Levi is doing great with his new hand," Jared said. "We have been encouraging him to pick up M&Ms with his thumb and eat them, which he can do with ease now."

### From Levi's Dad

Everyone at the hospital—from the administrative staff, to the nursing staff, and the surgeons—made sure that we were comfortable, and at ease.

Atlanta should be proud to showcase its health care, hospitality, and travel industries. My family was treated the way that I would hope visitors to Louisiana would be treated in similar circumstances. We thank everyone involved with our stay for that.

**Jared Hebert**, MAURICE, La. (Levi's Dad)

*See all of his comments to The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

*(<http://www.ajc.com/news/news/opinion/readers-write/nb85m/>) .*

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