Parker Stanwix was born four months early and was the size of a water bottle—weighing in at 1 pound, 9 ounces.

After undergoing countless medical complications including a brain bleed, his mother, Keri Barone, was told her “micro-preemie” baby would have slim odds of being able to walk, talk, see, hear, or have a normal degree of intelligence.

“My little fighter spent 108 days in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Golisano Children’s Hospital at University of Rochester’s Medical Center,” said Barone, a senior lecturer in RIT’s School of Communication. “I took him home a week after his due date in Feb. 2010; the phenomenal hospital staff and early intervention from United Way-supported agencies gave him the chance to survive and thrive.”

Parker is now 5 years old and attends kindergarten at DeWitt Road Elementary in Webster. During his lifetime, he has received feeding, speech, occupational and physical therapies from Daystar, Clinical Associates of the Finger Lakes, CP Rochester, BOCES and Liberty Post.

“Parker was diagnosed with autism, but seeing him in person you’d never know he had a problem,” said Barone. “He’s really, really smart, loves karate, loves school, has lots of friends and is overly social.

“And the best part is, my ‘mighty’ Parker can walk, talk, see and hear. I am forever grateful.”