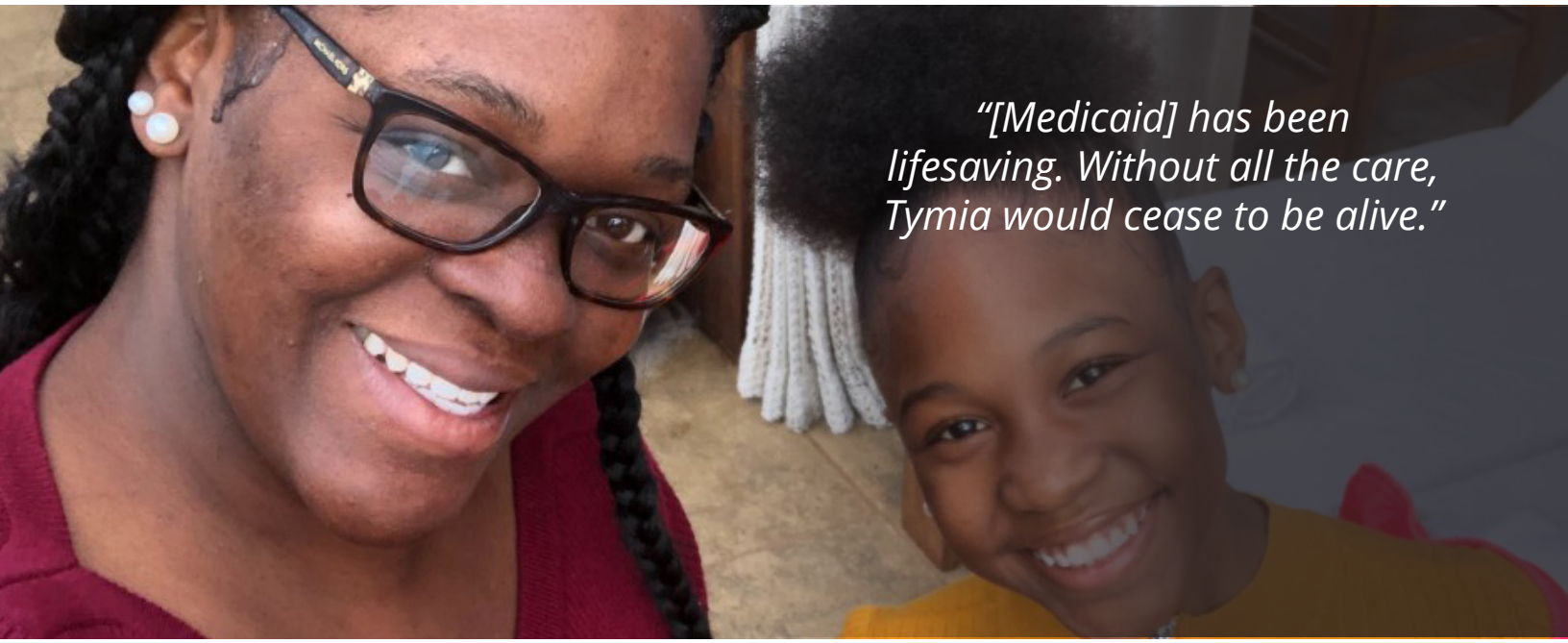
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

When a Life is Saved

Susie P. - Georgetown, South Carolina



That's Medicaid *shares stories of people covered by Medicaid at critical points in their lives, underscoring the importance of stable health insurance coverage in building a Culture of Health.*

Susie Pitts was working as a restaurant hostess in 2005 when she learned that the private health insurance she received through her job was about to end. She was pregnant at the time and enrolled in Medicaid to maintain coverage.

The decision turned out to be crucial—her daughter Tymia started needed urgent medical care at two months old and was soon diagnosed with sickle cell disease.

Since that diagnosis Tymia had been admitted to the hospital more than 75 times, received nearly 60 blood transfusions, and gone through multiple life-saving surgeries. Because of Medicaid, Susie and Tymia have been able to meet with sickle cell specialists and get needed prescriptions.

"It's all because of the care Medicaid offered," Susie says. "Without all of the care Tymia would cease to be alive. It allows her to be herself and to be normal."

For a long time Susie lost work opportunities due to the care needed for her daughter. Now she is a tax accountant, which gives her flexibility to be with the now 14-year-old Tymia—who will always have access to the health coverage she needs thanks to Medicaid.

"It's not a government program that people depend on," Susie says. "It's an advancement to self-individualization, so people can be themselves."