

14-year-old plans fund-raiser for genetic disorder research

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CANDACE PRESTON-COY

ThisWeek Staff Writer

Rachel Rovder is a typical teen.

The Powell 14-year-old plays in the string orchestra at Olentangy Liberty High School, participates in competitive ice skating outside of school, and enjoys spending time with her family and friends.

She is also compassionate and aware of those around her with special needs.

It is those qualities that come into play as Rachel prepares for her 15th birthday on Jan. 25.

Instead of presents from her friends, Rachel wants something else from them: money for research to help find a cure for the leading genetic killer of children under the age of 2: spinal muscular atrophy (SMA) type 1.

Rachel's birthday falls just 11 days before Madison Rose Reed of Dublin turns 7. At the age of 8 months Madison was diagnosed with SMA Type 1. Because of the care she's received from her parents and those around her, Madison is beating the odds. But she faces almost daily crises that threaten her life.

Instead of a birthday party, Rachel is organizing a dance at the City of Powell Village Green Community Center on Jan. 23 from 7 to 10 p.m. Admission is \$10 in advance or at the door, or \$25 for three or more members of the same family, with all proceeds going to SMA research.

This is second time Rachel has used her birthday to raise money for SMA. She did the same thing in 2002 when she turned 13 and raised \$1,300.

"I just love Madison to death," said the soon-to-be 15-year-old. "I'm thrilled to be helping Madison, and so are my friends."

Two local bands, Hinged and Pocket Lint, will provide entertainment.

The members of both bands attend Liberty High School: Chase Harkins, Rhett Harkins, Brent Schrock and Brian Ward in Hinged, and Nick Ely, Andrew King, Byron Lewis, Brendan Smith and Adam Vires in Pocket Lint. They are appearing at no charge.

Pizza, soda and cake will be served compliments of Pepsi Bottling Co. and Pizzano's Pizza.

There will also be a raffle with tickets sold at the event.

Rachel's mother and Madison's mother went to high school together and have remained friends. Rachel first met Madison at a fund-raiser a few years ago and became quickly attached to the bubbly little girl.

Madison's parents, Annette and Carl Reed, are thrilled that Rachel wants to help and extremely impressed with the girl's dedication to the project.

"I think it's fantastic what she's doing," said Carl Reed.

"I don't want any birthday gifts," said Rachel. "The donation is what is important."

SMA Type 1 destroys nerve cells known as motor neurons which control voluntary movements such as crawling, walking, head and neck control, and swallowing. Most deaths come from lung problems.

When Madison was diagnosed, researchers at The Ohio State University Medical Center were working on a cure for the disease but were hampered by a lack of funds. Since then, the Miracle for Madison Foundation has raised more than \$430,000 for that research.

The major fund-raiser for the Miracle for Madison fund -- Madison's Angels at the End Zone -- is set for March 6 at the Buckeye Hall of Fame Cafe. The sixth annual event will be in two parts, a family fun fest from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and a dinner-auction from 6 p.m. to midnight.

Information on the event can be found at www.miracleformadison.org.