

# Hope has lifted family beyond dire prognosis

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About nine years ago, a doctor told Carl and Annette Reed that it was their lucky day, that he actually had treated a child with Type 1 spinal muscular atrophy and really knew the score.

The parents of 15-month-old Madison perked up with hope.

Then the doctor told them to take their daughter home, let her go, let her die.

Children such as Madison, who are found to have SMA as infants, never walk, he insisted, barely talk or swallow and rely on machines to feed them.

It would be a miracle if Madison survived another six months, the doctor told the Dublin couple, and all the more a blessing if they just let her go.

The Reeds put their money on the miracle and defined their own little blessing — an angel who turned 10 last month.

On Saturday, everyone can celebrate at the ninth annual Madison's Angels at the End Zone Family Fun Fest fundraiser from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Buckeye Hall of Fame Cafe, 1421 Olentangy River Rd. Admission and entertainment are free.

A silent auction and dinner are planned for the evening at the same location.

Proceeds from both events benefit Miracle for Madison, an arm of the Ohio State University Foundation. The money is spent on research aimed at curing SMA.

So far, the Reeds have raised about \$865,000 through this and other events, including candy sales at elementary schools. In the meantime, OSU researchers have identified the genetic marker for SMA and cured the disease in laboratory mice. Now, a human drug trial for people with Types 2 and 3 SMA is under way.

Madison is not a candidate; the risks outweigh any potential benefits.

A peaches-and-cream wisp of a child, she has long, wavy hair that falls in a twisting ponytail below her waist. Her bright eyes follow everything.

She must be carried and cuddled on the outside. Inside, she is all intelligent fervor, music and color, sparkling ambition, as if she had swallowed the sun.

Last year, she struggled with a sudden and serious — because there is no other kind for her — respiratory infection. Annette resorted to the greatest temptation in her arsenal.

"I told her, 'If you fight this, if you make it through, I'll let you have a white cat.' Well, she didn't forget about that cat."

Madison named it Angel.

Yesterday, the almost-fullgrown kitten dallied with a plastic grocery bag on the floor near Madison, who was working on a painting.

At first, Madison grappled with the theme. What was she going to say with her painting?

A few minutes later, her therapist was dipping one of the cat's paws in neon-pink paint to punctuate the four corners of the canvas with — what else? — Angel prints.

The finished work will be auctioned Saturday. Her painting last year fetched more than \$850.

The star of the event will be Madison. Her story has inspired children and their parents across the state and nation. Most with infantile SMA have heard the same hopeless advice at one time or another. Madison has lived to prove the alternative.

Someone once told me that journalists get to meet lots of celebrities. Maybe, but two days ago, I met an angel; and surely that counts for more.

For more information on SMA and Miracle for Madison, go to [www.miracleformadison.org](http://www.miracleformadison.org).

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