

Local businesses raise funds for SMA research

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Several Dublin businesses have joined in the fight against the leading genetic killer of children under two by helping to raise money for research.

August is SMA (Spinal Muscular Atrophy) Awareness month and several local businesses have placed containers on their counters to collect money for the Miracle for Madison Fund, which supports SMA research at The Ohio State University Medical Center, according to Annette Reed.

Annette Reed is the mother of five-year-old Madison Reed, for whom the fund is named. Madison was diagnosed with one of the most lethal forms of the disease, SMA1, and was not expected to live past her second birthday. Because of the care she receives from her parents, her medical team and volunteers from around the Dublin community, Madison is beating the odds, her mother said. Her father, Carl, is a teacher at Dublin Coffman High School and the family lives in Dublin.

The life expectancy of a child with SMA1 is two years. The disease destroys nerve cells known as motor neurons, which control voluntary movements such as crawling, walking, head and neck control, and swallowing.

While the contributions will help, Annette Reed said, the main focus of the fund-raiser is to raise awareness of the disease.

"Awareness right now is very critical," she said. "The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes (NINDS) has recognized SMA as a very probably curable disease" and will begin a transitional study this fall to convert findings from laboratories into treatment options for patients.

Dr. Kenneth Fischbeck is chief of the Neurogenetics Branch, Division of Intramural Research with NINDS. In a presentation to a NINDS advisory council, he said SMA was chosen for the study "because of the severity of the disease, its relatively high incidence and the fact that the gene has been identified and the gene product is known, resulting in leads on possible treatments."

With adequate funding for research into treatments, he said, it could have "implications for other diseases."

Putting out a jar for donations "is an easy way for businesses to help," Mrs. Reed said.

Two local businesses -- Handel's Homemade Ice Cream in Hilliard and DaNay's coffee and gift shop in Shawnee Hills -- have been collecting for SMA since March. For August, Reed has seven other businesses signed up, some with multiple locations: Tim Hortons on Perimeter Drive, Dublin Cleaners (five locations), Dublin Dairy Queen, Maggie Moos in Dublin, Mailboxes Etc. in Dublin, Dana's Coffee House in Dublin and Pizzano's Pizza in Dublin and at Polaris.

"I can't thank these businesses enough for their support," Mrs. Reed said.

While many businesses raise money and call attention to various charities during the holidays, the focus drops off during other times of the year, said Mark McCormick, owner/manager of DaNay's.

The coffee shop joined the Miracle for Madison team in March and plans to remain involved, he said. "I think it is a great cause."

Handel's, with several locations in Youngstown, Annette Reed's home town, opened on March 21 on Feder Road in Hilliard.

"Annette saw we were opening and thought we might like to get involved in the Miracle for Madison Fund," said co-owner Chris DeAngelo. It didn't take much to convince him to put the container up and some signs in the window after meeting Madison.

"She's such a sweet little girl, such a sweetheart," he said.