

Miracle for Madison Senior's thesis to raise funds for charity

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CARLA SMITH
ThisWeek Staff Writer

Upper Arlington High School senior Erick Evans said he wanted his senior thesis to make a difference in someone else's life.

Evans said it was difficult to think of and choose just the right charity, but he found what he was looking for at his place of employment, Sawmill Athletic Club.

His boss, Michelle Worrellia, suggested he might look into a fairly new organization called "Miracle for Madison and Friends."

The organization, she said, is dedicated to finding a cure for Spinal Muscular Atrophy, the number one genetic killer of children under two years old. Worrellia's niece Madison has the disease, and it was her sister who formed the the non profit organization.

After checking out the web site and doing extensive research on the disease, there was no doubt that Evans had found a good cause to devote his thesis to, he said.

As part of the project, Evans will try and raise dollars for the cause through a Swim-a-Thon he will be holding at Sawmill Athletic Club from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. on Dec. 17. The club, he said will allow him to have a single lane of the pool devoted to swimmers who will swim laps to raise money for Madison.

"Each swimmer will take a half hour to swim as many laps as they can," he said.

Swimmers will be soliciting pledges for each lap ranging from 5 cents to \$5.

Evans is currently recruiting swimmers from the high school while Worrellia is helping him recruit swimmers from the athletic club.

While he hasn't set himself a monetary goal, it is his hope to raise as much money as he can to go towards the research in finding a cure, he said.

"Fund raising is harder than I thought," he said. "I had this vision and that vision has become a little bit different."

His original plan, he said, was to hold the event at the high school. The pool, however, was unavailable for such an event. Recruiting swimmers is his next difficult task and anyone who can swim is invited to participate, he said.

"This doesn't get as much media attention as other diseases, and it's something I didn't know much about," he said. "I had no idea that this is a disease you can develop later in life."

SMA is an inherited and sometimes fatal disease that destroys the nerve cells controlling voluntary movement such as crawling, walking, head and neck control, as well as swallowing and breathing.

Worrellia said what Evans is doing is awesome and plans on introducing Madison to him in person before the swim event.

"Some diseases don't get any recognition," she said. "These kids, even though they are in a wheel chair, are still able to do things. Madison showcases that everyday."

More information about SMA and Madison's story is available on the web site at www.miracleformadison.org.