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Community joins fight to help teen walk

Bowling fundraiser organized for 13-year-old with cerebral palsy

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Bowling has become 13-year-old Matthew McQuaid's favorite way of striking back against cerebral palsy.

It also will provide the community with a chance to become involved in the Dublin teen's care.

AMF Sawmill Lanes, professional bowler Parker Bohn III and the Kiwanis Club of Greater Dublin are among those banding together to help raise money for Matthew's treatment for tripegia cerebral palsy, a neuromuscular disorder.

Featuring bowling, prizes, a 50-50 raffle and auction, the fundraiser will be held from 2 to 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 25 at AMF Sawmill Lanes, 4825 Sawmill Road.

Proceeds will go to a foundation set up in Matthew's name at the Euro-Peds therapy program in Pontiac, Mich. The cost of his twice-a-year, two-week treatment sessions is \$13,000, including living expenses, and insurance does not cover the relatively new therapy, mother



By Ann Tormet/Villager

Playing with his junior league team, Matthew McQuaid, 13, bowls at AMF Sawmill Lanes last Saturday. A fundraiser will be held at the lanes Monday, Feb. 25, to raise money for Matthew's cerebral palsy treatment.

Jill McQuaid said.

With the clinic's help Matthew has learned to stand, walk with a walker and, most recently, ride an adapted bike. It also has helped him recover weakened skills after his multiple hip surgeries and an invasive spinal fusion.

"Without the intensive therapy, there's no doubt he'd be wheelchair bound today," his mother said. "But, instead, he's independently walking the bases at Miracle League, playing soccer from his walker with friends at Locker Soccer and proudly walking into school and the local bowling alley."

In preparation for a recent demonstration of what her son has learned, McQuaid cupped her hands over her mouth, lowered her voice and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, Matthew is about to transfer."

He placed his hands on his walker, stood and turned in a circle, slowly moving his hands around the rails and positioning his feet as trained, then sat down.

"That took him 40 hours to learn," McQuaid said.

Ohio State University student and independent provider Kristy Noe helps with his two-hour-a-day home exercises.

"By supporting him, I help make his life better," Noe said. "It's one of the best feelings I can imagine."

At Euro-peds and at home, Matthew's passion for bowling is part of his daily exercise routine. During "scoot" exercises, he maneuvered his body across a low padded table to kick over a bowling pin. He then raised his hands and said, "Everyone cheer."

Matthew began bowling at age 5 using a ramp. He now bowls three times a week at Sawmill Lanes, where he is a member of the Junior League, and is strong enough to roll his 12-pound bowling ball down the lane without assistance.

With the ball on his lap, Matthew wheels himself up to the foul line, positions himself at the appropriate angle, picks up the ball from his lap and rolls it toward the pins. He bowls from his wheelchair rather than from his walker so he doesn't lose his balance.

"This league challenged Matthew to learn how to roll a ball without his specialized bowling ball ramp or bumpers," his mother said.

Bowling also has enabled Matthew to reclaim some independence, because "it's something he can do with his brothers and friends," his mother said.

Matthew's bedroom is decorated with a bowling-themed bedspread and curtains, and 13 bowling pins stand atop his dresser and bedside table. He is a diligent viewer of pro

bowling on Sunday afternoons. After he met Bohn three years ago at an event in western Ohio and bowled with him, Matthew's passion for the sport intensified, his mother said.

Besides bowling, Matthew said he loves Chuck E. Cheese and PlayStation. When the Karrer Middle School student rolled a perfect score of 300 on his PlayStation bowling game, he called Bohn to say, "I'm a better bowler than you."

Bohn, a member of the United States Bowling Congress Hall of Fame, recognizes how important bowling is to Matthew.

"There's a sense of fulfillment of rolling the ball down the lane and knocking down the pins," Bohn said. "He's doing it for enjoyment, and that brings joy to me and to others."

Diagnosed with cerebral palsy when he was 11 months old, Matthew suffered a brain hemorrhage at birth. His mother delivered early; Matthew weighed only two pounds.

"It took me a long time to realize this happened for a good reason," said McQuaid, who majored in special education during college. "I understand the way he touches others and helps them appreciate life."

She said his classmates line up to help him, and she is grateful for the opportunity to mentor other families of children with cerebral palsy.

Matthew's three younger brothers -- Tommy, 10; Owen, 7; and Colin, 5 -- are his "biggest blessings," McQuaid said. "They add normalcy to our lives and are role models for Matthew."

Sawmill Lanes manager Rick May has donated between 30 and 50 lanes for the fundraiser. "Matthew loves to bowl, and he doesn't let anything hold him back. He's such a good kid, and this is a good opportunity for us to give him a helping hand."

Auction items include a \$2,500 membership fee waiver for Coraz`on Club & Spa and an Ohio State football and photo signed by coach Jim Tressel.

"People are so nice," McQuaid said. "It's things like this that make it all seem easier."