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PENDLETON, OREGON

faith *therapy*

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Michael Seggerman wipes the face of his son, Nicholas, Tuesday at their home in Pendleton. Nicholas, 11, was born with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy and will travel with his parents in July to Michigan to undergo a new treatment called Euro-Peds. *Staff photo by E.J. Harris*

Eleven-year-old Nicholas Seggerman has been through a lot in his short life. Born with spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, Nicholas lives life from his wheelchair, unable to speak clearly or move his limbs with enough control to write or feed himself. Often, he has breathing trouble or problems, such as a 90-degree curve in his spine, that can only be helped with surgery.

"We haven't gone through a year without surgery or hospital time," said Nicholas' father, Michael.

Just six weeks ago, Nicholas had a plate and a pin placed in his pelvis to keep his hip joint in place. After the surgery, he was in a cast from the waist down for several weeks.

But Nicholas enjoys life like very few "normal" children do. He's always got the biggest smile on his face. Just hanging out with his family - Michael, mother Naomi, Dalton, 6, and Joey, 7, - keeps him laughing.

In July, Nicholas and his parents will take a big leap of faith. They will fly to Michigan to try a new therapy for Nicholas that may help him grow and learn - maybe even walk.

Euro-Peds is an intensive physical therapy program for children with neuromuscular disorders. It is available only at North Oakland Medical Center, a non-profit hospital in Pontiac, Mich.

While conventional physical therapy for cerebral palsy typically is one hour a week, the Euro-Peds program gives children four to 20 hours of therapy a week, using innovative techniques and equipment.

The centerpiece of the Euro-Peds program is "suit therapy." Wearing a tight-fitting suit made of soft cloth and suspended from a metal "cage" by a series of bungee-like rubber cords, children are able to practice correct alignment. The suit also allows the therapist to target specific muscles and work on movements.

Children's progress with the program often is so fast it seems miraculous, say parents whose children have gone through the program.

"They learn more in two weeks than they do in their whole life," Michael said.

Naomi said she stumbled on the Euro-Peds Web site one day, and determined to send Nicholas to the program.

"I think God opened the door for us and presented it for us to take him," Michael said.

Taking a leap of

Boy with cerebral palsy tries new

In addition to the two-week therapy program, Euro-Peds will send the Seggermans home with new techniques for helping Nicholas' progress at home.

The Seggermans' insurance policy will cover all of the Euro-Peds program except the suit therapy, which costs \$3,600 for the two-week session, Naomi said.

To raise money for the suit therapy and their travel expenses, the Seggermans are holding a benefit auction and hot dog feed from 5-7 p.m. June 14 at Stillman Park.

Hollywood Video, Wilcox Furniture, Hamley's, Roosters and Oxford Suites have donated gift certificates or merchandise for the auction.

Michael and Naomi say they have been blessed with support from the community ever since they decided to try Euro-Peds.

The Pendleton Assembly of God put on a "no-talent talent show" and fundraising spaghetti dinner. And the Echo Methodist Church has helped with donations and a raffle.

The Seggermans have established an account at Oregon First Community Credit Union for donations.

If the Euro-Peds program works as well as they hope it will, they say they will do whatever it takes to get Nicholas back to Michigan for more sessions.

"Even if we have to sell everything in our house, we're going," Michael said.