

Local woman organizing fundraiser for EB cure



Trisha Wirick with her nephew Tyler.

by Tammy Drobina

Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB) is a debilitating genetic skin disease that affects one out of every 50,000 births. The last week of October has been declared National EB Awareness week and a Carroll woman has a fundraiser planned to help find a cure.

Trisha Wirick, 40, is a married working mom of two who learned she is an EB carrier. It has also affected other members of her family: a nephew passed away from EB twelve years ago, at six months of age.

"EB is characterized by skin and mucous membranes that are so fragile the slightest friction can cause severe blistering—inside and outside the body. Today there is no cure and no treatment except daily wound care and bandaging," Wirick explained.

Epidermolysis Bullosa is a rare genetic disorder characterized by extremely fragile skin and recurrent blistering from minor friction or trauma. The blisters often de-

velop into painful open sores and ulcers, but are not confined to the skin. They develop on mucous membranes, often in the oral cavity. More severe forms may involve the external surface of the eye or the respiratory or gastrointestinal tracts. In some forms of the disease, disfiguring scars and disabling musculoskeletal deformities occur.

EB children are referred to as "Butterfly Children" due to the fact that the fragility of their skin is comparable to the wings of a butterfly.

Wirick's nephew Tyler was born August 13, 1996. Twelve hours after birth they determined he had EB and he died February 11, 1997 of complications from the disease. "It was a horrible life that this precious baby had to endure," said Wirick.

Wirick did not know she was a carrier until after Tyler was born. When she became pregnant with her second child in 2001 she was tested and found she carried the gene, but her husband did not. "He did not have the mutated gene so my kids do not show symptoms of the illness, but could be carriers. I will have them tested when they get a little bit older," she said.

In 2006, the last week of October was made National EB Awareness week. To raise funds to find a cure, Wirick is planning the 1st Annual Tyler Fisher Spaghetti Dinner & Auction on October 10 from 5-7pm at Brice United Methodist Church, 3160 Brice Rd., Brice.

Wirick said Lindsey Gregg, Mrs. Ohio International 2009, will be there. Her platform is EB as she has a son with it, and she also works for DebRA

(Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa Research Association of America).

Doctors are working on a cure. In June of 2008, researchers introduced the concept of bone marrow and circulating stem cell transplantation as a treatment for one type of this disorder with success and DebRA of America is the only national non-profit who supports EB research and provides programs and services to people with EB and their families, Wirick explained.

"I felt compelled to fundraise to help find a cure for this horrible disease that took my nephew's life. I work for White Castle and have only done little things at work to fundraise. This year I wanted to expand my efforts. I want everyone to know what Epidermolysis Bullosa is and the effects it has on families," she said.

Wirick has an open house set for Sept. 19 from 4-8pm at 8266 W. Ohio State Ln. (Collegeview Acres), Lancaster featuring 15 different consultants and orders will be accepted until October 10. A percentage of each order will be donated to EB research.

There are about 175 families being treated in Ohio at the Cleveland Clinic and at Children's Hospital in Columbus and Cincinnati. If you would like more information about EB, DebRA's website is www.debra.org.

"This is an opportunity for you to make a difference in the lives of thousands of EB families," Wirick added.

For more information or to donate, please email Trisha at wirick14@hotmail.com or call 614-834-5525. Her website is www.tylerfisherebawareness.org.

Trevor and Violet Jones Scholarships Awarded



(L to R) Alex Hopkins, Nicole Bush, Krystal Keller, Nicole Hill, Zach Gabriel, Alexander Reinhorn, Ed Brookover, Treva Jones, and Dr. Jon Detwiler.

The Fairfield County Foundation has announced the winners of the Trevor and Violet Jones Memorial Scholarship grants for the 2009-2010 academic year. These students are judged on academic achievement, school activities and financial need.

The following graduates from Millersport High School, class of 2009, received the E. Trevor Jones Memorial Scholarship: Krystal Keller, Nicole Hill, Zach Gabriel and Alexander Reinhorn. Previous Millersport High School graduates Alex Hopkins and Nicole Bush also received scholarships. Each was awarded \$1,000.00 toward their education.

The Trevor and Violet Jones

Memorial Scholarship was established in 1992 by Dr. Jon Detwiler, a former student of Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones was a coach and teacher in Fairfield County for 44 years, the majority being at Millersport Schools. Mrs. Jones was an elementary school teacher with 36 years of teaching mostly in Millersport.

Contributions may be sent to the Trevor and Violet Jones Memorial Scholarship Fund, PO Box 755, Millersport, Ohio 43046.

For further information regarding scholarships, contact Amy Eyman, Fairfield County Foundation, (740) 654-8451 or visit www.fairfieldcountyfoundation.org.

www.fairfieldtowncrier.com

Fresh Country Air

by Matt Reese

My wife and I just celebrated seven years of blissful marriage. Every once in awhile, she will pull out the old wedding album and reminisce about our fancy wedding day. With plenty of help from our extended family, we did almost everything from the food to the décor for the big event and my attentive wife missed no detail -- except for one. We did not have

doves.

According to Craig Miller, owner of Craig's Releasable Doves in Allen County, the elegant birds add a special touch to a wedding or most any event. Miller, now 22, grew up raising just about every kind of poultry he could through 4-H. Back in 2005, he came across an advertisement that intrigued him.

"I saw in a magazine that there

was a dove business in Columbus and I thought that might be something good to have up here," Miller said. "Then, at one of the swap meets I went to, I got some white homing pigeons to start my dove business. We use the larger, white birds because they are easier to handle."

Miller was immediately excited about the idea. After all, what could go wrong with a business

plan including animals that come back after being sold? Miller said the birds are pretty easy to care for and stay very clean.

He started out with four birds that reproduced prolifically. Now he has about 80 on his northwest Ohio farm.

"You need to have plenty of birds because you are going to lose some. Only about 75% of them fly back," Miller said.

Thus far, weddings and funerals account for nearly all of Miller's dove release events. Releases are either done by hand or simply opening the top of the cage.

"We typically release two for a wedding, one for the bride and one for the groom," he said. "The bride and the groom each hold one and release them at the same time. The birds usually fly up and do a circle then fly off. Everybody loves it."

Funeral dove releases tend to evoke even stronger emotions.

"In a funeral we can help with the healing process a little bit," Miller said. "This symbol means so much to some people that it is really amazing. At funerals, releasing the dove is almost like they're letting that person go."

At a funeral for a friend, the four children of the deceased each released a dove at the funeral. One of the doves, instead of returning to their home, went to the home of the deceased several miles from the gravesite and the opposite direction of Miller's home.

Miller does not have a set fee, but bases his cost on the specifics of the situation and the amount of travel required.

"We have gone to events in Putnam, Van Wert and Paulding counties, and if someone hears about us and wants us to go somewhere else, we're willing to do some traveling," Miller said.

The business is fairly small at this point, with about one dove release a month, which is fine for Miller who is a senior in agricultural engineering at Ohio State University. His dad, Kenny, helps with the birds and the business while Miller is in Columbus. Miller does not release the birds in the cold winter months or in the rain to protect the birds.

For events, Miller shows up at the appropriate time dressed in a suit with wet wipes, hand sanitizer and the proper number of doves in an elegant looking cage under a cloth cover.

Though my wife may lament the lack of doves at our wedding, all hope is not lost. Our young daughter will probably have a fancy wedding someday, and my wife may kill me for complaining about paying for it. Wedding or funeral -- either way, we'll probably need some doves..

For more about Miller's Dove Business, please contact Craig at 419-233-8200 or e-mail kmiller179@woh.rr.com.

Matt Reese writes for *Ohio's Country Journal* and lives in *Baltimore, Ohio*. For questions or comments, please contact him at mkreese@yahoo.com. For more columns visit freshcountryair.blogspot.com.

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