

Locals band together for patient

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By Kristal Dixon
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Local businesses are coming together to make a young Cherokee County girl's home more accessible as she recovers from cancer.

Southeast Restoration Group of Holly Springs is spearheading a reconstruction project at the home of Sydney Stewart, the 11-year-old daughter of Donald and Kim Stewart of southwest Cherokee.

Sydney, who has suffered from posterior fossa syndrome since having two medulloblastoma tumors removed from her brain and brain stem in December, has been hospitalized at Children's Hospital of Atlanta since the surgery. She uses a wheelchair for mobility.

With posterior fossa syndrome, a common condition child patients develop after brain tumor removal surgery, patients become mute and are unable to move their arms and legs.

Benny Carter, business development leader at Southeast Restoration, said the corporation decided to install a wheelchair lift at her home because, "Sydney has been a burden on our hearts."

"We knew they needed help," he said. "It was natural for us. This is the kind of work we do."

In order for the lift to fit, renovations need to be made to the Stewart's home.

A closet and landing above the garage entrance will be demolished to make way for the lift. Doorways to the bathroom, bedroom and the front entrance will also be widened to accommodate Sydney and her wheelchair.

Part of the staircase in the Stewart's home will be removed as well.

The lift, a Savaria Telecab Elevator purchased from Accessibility Solutions in Lawrenceville, cost just more than \$8,000, according to Carter.

Sheriff Roger Garrison's charitable organization recently conducted a golf tournament and donated about \$9,000 from the proceeds to the effort for Sydney, Mrs. Stewart said.

Garrison said he decided to make the gift because it was "what his charity is all about."

"God's blessed me and my family, and I'm honored to help other families," he said. "The need is there."

C&D Trim Express Inc. of Holly Springs, Bone Contracting and Warren Wood Works also are contributing sponsors for the project.

On Nov. 28, Sidney was diagnosed with a medulloblastoma, a brain tumor that grows between the cerebellum and the brain stem.

In recent weeks, Sydney has started moving more, Mrs. Stewart said.

She's able to move her right hand and arm, her right leg and is squeezing with her left hand. She's also able to move her left toes. Mrs. Stewart said Sydney also let out a scream late one night.

Mrs. Stewart said she and her family are looking forward to seeing the lift installed.

"I couldn't believe it," she said of the donations. "I was so excited."

Mrs. Stewart said Sydney originally was scheduled to leave the hospital last month, but an inflammation of her cecum set her back.

Sydney developed typhlitis, an inflammation of the cecum, a pouch that forms the first part of the large intestines. She has finished a round of antibiotics and will soon begin chemotherapy. She will receive monthly chemotherapy treatments until February 2009.

Sydney will not be released from the hospital until her doctors medically clear her.

"We cannot wait for the day, even if it's just for a day or two" before returning to the hospital, Mrs. Stewart said. "Once she's back home, it will uplift her spirits."