

Review Appeal

Since 1813

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2005



FILE

Marcy Payne's love of animals led her to start Happy Tales Humane.

TOURNAMENT SHOOTS TO RAISE MONEY FOR FAMILY

Mulligans for Marcy to assist with treatment costs

By LESLIE ANN SHOEMAKE

For Franklin Review Appeal

FRANKLIN — Every golfer knows that a mulligan is a second chance, but for Marcy Payne, the term applies to more than golf. Payne is a woman looking for another shot at life, and friends and neighbors are doing everything they can to help that dream come true.

Della Pratt, a neighbor of the Paynes in Fieldstone Farms, is spearheading Mulligans for Marcy, a golf tournament at The Fairways on Spencer Creek on Sept. 22. Registration will begin at 9 a.m., and all proceeds will go to help fund Payne's medical treatments.

"So many people are familiar with her story but they don't know how close she is," Pratt said. "She's our neighbor; we just want to help."

In 2000, when Payne was 37 years old, doctors diagnosed her with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Payne, the impetus of Happy Tales Humane, had just celebrated the opening of the cat shelter in The Factory when she



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Marcy enjoys the Christmas parade in Downtown Franklin last year.

MULLIGANS

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had to step down from her post as executive director. Since then, Payne has gone from winning 5K and 10K races to being quadriplegic in a hospital bed in her living room.

"It's been so gradual that it's hard to think about how much our lives have changed," said Rob Payne, Marcy's husband. "I have a completely different life now."

The symptoms were minor at first. Payne noticed a twitch in her leg, and her daily runs began taking longer than usual. There is no known cause or cure for the disease that attacks muscle-controlling nerve cells in the brain and inhibits movement, eventually paralyzing victims. Payne now spends her days in bed at home, where she uses a speech synthesizer to talk and a respirator to breathe.

Rather than giving up, Payne has chosen to live.

"As ALS closed the communication of Marcy's nerves to her muscles, the diagnosis has opened our communication to God," Rob said. "We no longer pray, 'If it is your will, please heal Marcy.' We have learned some of the Bible verses that show us that it is God's will to heal, and we know that Marcy will



Darcy, Marcy, Rob and Matthew Payne are shown in this 1997 photo as they attend the Brentwood July 4th Celebration held on the lawn of Brentwood Library.

be made whole."

The disease has not stopped Payne's playful personality. Her eyes sparkle as she calls Rob "Mr. Mom" and reminds him to prepare her antibiotics. Her love of animals also remains evident, even in the artwork of dogs and cats in formal attire above the fireplace.

Payne's viewpoint from the living

room, the heart of the home, allows the mother of two to stay involved in everything that's going on.

For five years they (Matt, 16, and Darcy, 11) have known nothing else," Rob said. "She has to use a speech synthesizer, but Marcy still tells them she loves them; she tells them they need to eat some vegetables, when to go to bed, if they can

have a sleepover — she's still Mom.

"Though our kids haven't been able to feel the loving arms of their mother hold them for almost four years, they have seen a flood of love that not everyone gets to see."

Rob left his work with a successful advertising agency in April 2003 in order to stay home and care for Marcy full time. Without a source of steady income from a job, the Paynes rely on donations to pay medical bills and simply keep the house running.

Friends and neighbors have rallied around the family and do everything they can to make their lives easier. From bringing dinner to gardening to washing clothes, people have engulfed the Paynes in a wave of love that inspired Rob to begin writing his weekly column, "Every Day is Precious."

"Writing a column hasn't been something that I've always wanted to do," Rob said. "But I can't get away from it because people keep doing things for us."

Pratt is just one of those people. Her relationship with the Paynes began in November 2004 when she began cooking dinner for them once a month. She wanted to do something to help, so after talking with friends from St. Matthew Catholic Church, she began organizing Mulligans for Marcy. As a golfer, it was an obvious way to raise money for the family.

"I'd been thinking about it for a while," Pratt said. "We all got really interested in their story, and we decided to do something. It's better to do something than nothing ... and to do it well."

With a goal to raise at least \$10,000 for the Paynes, Pratt, along with the rest of her small group from St. Matthew's, is seeking both sponsors and players for the tournament.

"The main thing right now is to get people to commit to play in the tournament," co-organizer Carol Pictor said. "We know that everyone's not a golfer. If they just want to contribute, they can do that as well."

The tournament is a nine-hole scramble with a shotgun start. There is room for 12 teams of four to play, but it is not necessary to be on a team to register. Registration fees are \$60 for individuals and \$240 for a team. Pratt and Pictor are also looking for sponsors, both tournament (\$200) and hole (\$100).

The big prize up for grabs is a Cadillac SRX SUV from Andrews Cadillac. A two-year lease on the vehicle will go to the lucky golfer who gets a hole-in-one on the winning hole. Lunch will be provided for the players, who also have the chance to win gift certificates to Carrabba's, lessons with a golf pro and Zoom teeth whitening by Dr. Nina Foley.

For more information on Marcy Payne or the golf tournament, visit www.everydayisprecious.com. To be a tournament sponsor, contact Della Pratt at 615-595-5964 or Carol Pictor at 615-591-6860. ■