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Finding a cure

Troy mother hoping to help daughter and others

By Mike Terry
Wednesday, January 31, 2007 1:15 PM CST

When Sophie Kreher was born in July 2004, she showed all the signs of being a healthy baby girl.

By the time she was about six months old, her parents Andy and Amy began to notice that she was not developing like other infants her age.

"She sat up, but that was it," Amy said. Doctors began doing regular blood tests on Sophie in hopes of discovering what was wrong. Then, at around 20 months, they diagnosed her with a very rare disorder called Rett syndrome.

Considered the most severe on the autism spectrum, Rett syndrome is a chromosomal mutation that almost exclusively affects girls and first shows in the first six to 18 months of life.

Due to its effects on brain signals, girls with the disorder are often unable to speak or have purposeful use of their hands. Some are unable to walk, while others have seizures or irregular breathing. Although Sophie's symptoms are not as severe as many children with RS, Amy said her child is unable to crawl, feed herself or talk.

Through the help of Child and Family Connections, Sophie goes through weekly physical, developmental and speech therapy and her parents remain hopeful that she will eventually be able to walk.

Most of her toys are outfitted with special switches, she is unable to squeeze them to make them work. With the switches, she can tap to operate the toys and can communicate with her family.

According to Amy, Sophie is also a very happy child who enjoys listening to music and playing with her toys, especially Elmo.

Since a cure has not yet been discovered for Rett syndrome, the Kreher family is now asking for help from the Troy community in raising funds for medical research through a national campaign known as Dress Up 2 Cure.

"Not only to help Sophie, but for other girls," Amy said.

Dress Up 2 Cure was started several years ago in Belleville, and runs between Jan. 1 and April 1. By making pledges or joining Team Sophie, supporters can exchange monetary donations and wear silly costumes on April Fools' Day.

Those interested in helping can visit the campaign Web site at www.dressup2cure.org.

Triad High School teacher Shannon Mallrich has been best friends with the Kreher family for many years and hoped to educate the public more about the disorder.



Mike Terry photo Amy Kreher of Troy plays with her 2-year-old daughter Sophie. As an infant, Sophie was diagnosed with the rare disorder Rett syndrome, impairing her motor skills and ability to communicate. The Kreher's are now looking for help from the local community in hopes of raising money for cure research.

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"It's not something a lot of people know about," she said, adding that she was trying to get a fund-raising program throughout the Triad district.

"She is just the sweetest little girl."

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