

Reye's benefit Saturday

A happy event will help launch a fall campaign against the dreaded Reye's Syndrome — an illness which has struck more children in Michigan than any other state.

An old-fashioned corn roast complete with hot air balloon rides, hay rides and blue grass music is set for 5-9 p.m. Saturday at the West Bloomfield Civic Center, Walnut Lake Road between Farmington and Orchard Lake roads.

All profits from the sale of food (corn on the cob, hot dogs, soft drinks, home-baked goodies and popcorn), tethered balloon rides (\$5 per person) and an hourly 50-50 raffle will go directly to the National Reye's Syndrome Foundation.

The evening is co-sponsored by the Michigan chapter of the Reye's Foundation and West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation.

Music by Waterford's Ron Brock and his four member bluegrass group will go throughout the evening free of charge as will hay rides around the rolling 49-acre Civic Center Site with guitar music "on board."

TETHERED HOT air balloon rides will be provided by licensed balloonist Ted Gauthier, weather permitting. Gauthier, a West Bloomfield firefighter, and Art Allen, a member of the Bloomfield Township Fire Department and treasurer of the state Reye's Foundation, have enlisted off-duty firemen from both townships to help with the roast.

The idea of co-sponsoring the corn roast began last spring in the Keego Harbor office of a screen print company, where T-shirts for the Reye's Syndrome

and the annual West Bloomfield Marathon were being printed.

Dana Allen, president of the Michigan chapter of the Reye's Foundation, asked the owners for their advice on a site for a proposed summer fundraiser. They put her in touch with West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation, which just happened to have an August corn roast scheduled as one of its family-oriented summer programs.

"We were looking for a way to spread our small staff thin enough to cook corn and hotdogs for at least 500 people," Parks and Recreation Director Fred Woelkers said. "The Reye's Foundation had the volunteers to handle this part of the event, but no place to hold it. It was a natural for us to join forces," he added.

Funds raised from this and other sources go for research and a stepped-up public awareness program on Reye's, reports Mrs. Allen, a Bloomfield Township resident whose 6-year-old daughter, Chris, was a Reye's victim.

"A FAMILY EVENT like this not only helps through the funds it generates. It helps because it gives us a chance to tell more people with children to be on the look-out for the symptoms of the syndrome. The sooner it is diagnosed, the more chance there is to treat it successfully — and that means parents knowing what to look for," she says.

"Reyes is like the Oakland County child killer in a sense," Mrs. Allen adds. "It is a disease that lurks and strikes healthy children. It is also a disease

which seems to single out children in suburban areas more often than those in inner cities."

In the eight months since its incorporation, the Michigan chapter has raised \$35,000 (60 percent returned in Michigan) through statewide fundraisers, memberships and private, corporate and organization donations. As part of its awareness campaign, the chapter has distributed 350,000 informational brochures which assist both doctors and parents to recognize the symptoms of Reye's. This effort alone has cost \$9,000 this year.

"People may not be thinking about Reye's right now, since it is most often seen during the winter months," Mrs. Allen explains. "But this is an ideal time for a fundraiser. The sooner we get the information out, the more lives will be saved."

In 1979, Mrs. Allen reports, six cases of Reye's were reported in September and early October, and three children died.

THE CORN ROAST for Reye's is the second benefit event in which West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation has participated this year.

Funds from the West Bloomfield Marathon went to help the township's Emergency Medical Service program. "Our business is to provide recreation to our residents," Woelkers points out. "In a sense, people in West Bloomfield benefit twice from these types of events — once from the fun they have and again from the services which organizations like EMS and Reye's provide for them as individuals."

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