

Hospital gives breath of life to asthmatic kids

BY SHERRY KAHAN

If your child breathes normally, it may be difficult for you to imagine the thrill felt by Mrs. Bobbie Williams of Canton Township when she saw a picture of her 11-year-old asthmatic son playing basketball.

The picture was snapped in Denver where Eric Williams is under treatment at the Children's Asthmatic Research Institute and Hospital.

When the boy left home he weighed 85 pounds, had the barrel chest often feared by asthmatics and looked very thin. He never slept through the night.

"He was not used to living a normal childhood life because of his breathing trouble," said Mrs. Williams.

AT THE CENTER he gained 23 pounds. Not only did he use his lungs playing basketball, but he used them as quarterback on a touch football team which won a trophy. He also went skiing.

"Sports have always been the great love of his life," she continued. "Out there he can participate in anything he wants. We have been simply amazed. It's the first year of his life he's been able to live."

This month Mrs. Williams is openly expressing her gratification to the center, called CARH, by wearing a large button containing the words "I March for Breath."

She will be marching door to door from now until May 31 with many others to raise money for CARH, which not only treats asthmatics, but tries to pass on the results of its research to doctors everywhere.

CHAIRMAN for the Detroit area march is Mrs. Mona Surma of Dearborn Heights. Permits have been secured by Mrs. Sandra Terry of Royal Oak, president of the Elaine Levin chapter, to conduct marches in many Oakland and Wayne County cities including, Southfield, Westland, Detroit, Birmingham, Garden City, Livonia, Plymouth, Farmington, Troy, Grosseville Hills, West Bloomfield and Berkley.

The Elaine Levin chapter's fundraising chairman, Joyce Morof of Southfield, recently led members in sponsoring a fundraising luncheon for the Denver center.

Mrs. Ernestine Meadows of Livonia, president of the Northwest Detroit chapter, like other chapter officials is looking for volunteers to help. She can be reached

evenings at 477-5543. Mrs. Terry can be contacted at 547-3888.

"IT COSTS ABOUT \$2,500 to keep a child," pointed out Mrs. Williams, adding that of the nine million Americans who have the disease, half are children.

With regard to Eric, she said it was "the hardest decision of her life" to let him leave home. He took up his new life in a six-room cottage with counselors as substitute parents.

"They have him on a very strict medical program," said his mother. "They constantly check his blood levels, have him breathe through an apparatus to determine if the medication he's on is best for his condition. Then they constantly alter them to find his very best program."

An early letter from Eric disclosed that he was having a good time in his new home. "I've got a lot of nice friends," he wrote.

Later he informed his parents that "I can swim across the pool and I can run." He added, "Most of all I can sleep at night."

The second thrust of CARH's program is to teach the child to be responsible for his own asthma. "They try to show the child how to cope with whatever climate he is returning to," stated Mrs. Williams.

A 13-YEAR-OLD CARH alumna who recently returned to her Garden City home is Erin McDonnell, who was a little nervous when she set out for the center.

"I learned how to control my asthma a lot better," she maintained. "I learned about the medications I am to take. I learned what not to do if the asthma starts. I feel a lot more grown up about what to do about my asthma."

"I feel 100 per cent better. There's no wheezing."

Her mother feels 100 per cent better too. "Before she went she didn't laugh, run or sleep through the night," said Mrs. Brigit McDonnell.

"In Denver she won four ribbons in track, played flag football and even threw or four times a week. Now she can walk a mile to school with no problem, she rides a bike, and probably most important of all, she sleeps."

She has had two minor attacks which were quickly handled. "Before she went, I was a case of asthma controlling the child," said Mrs. McDonnell. "Now that she's back she can control the asthma."

She added, "I don't remind her of anything. She knows her limitations. It really makes you feel great."

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Divorced invited to Bethney party

Bethney, Northside Group, an organization of separated and divorced persons who gather for mutual support, will hold its first social event in Farmington May 22 at the Lake of the Northside Catholic Church.

The Northside Group is one of six Bethney groups in the Detroit area supported

by the Catholic Church in recognition of the plight of the separated and divorced persons.

Joyce Martell, speaker for the group said, "The purpose of Bethney is to help you meet your needs whether they are spiritual, educational, social or supportive." It is open to Christians of all denominations.

Ms. Martell believes that divorce can and often does become a new beginning. She quotes a member as saying, "When I was growing up I was somebody's daughter. Then I became somebody's wife. Then I became somebody's mother. Now that I am divorced I've finally become somebody."

Ms. Martell does not think of Bethney as a haven for separated and divorced persons, but rather a resource for growth, a source of friendship and a stimulus toward a new beginning.

THE PARTY the group is sponsoring begins at 8:30 p.m. Inquiries about the party, or about Bethney, will be taken by Tom Regan, 828-9988, after 4 p.m.

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