

Family of MD victim sees hope

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"I guess this is the strongest drug ever used and to put it into these young boys sounds particularly grossing to me," she said. "I just want to know everything about it before we participate in the research."

WHILE WATCHING TV clips of MDA's chairman, Jerry Lewis, host the national segment of his 2 1/2-hour telethon from Las Vegas shortly before 1 p.m. Monday, Eric sat anxiously.

He was waiting to go on the air

with Channel 2 newscaster Bruce Kirk and friend Ron Witherspoon, a MDA attendant volunteer and a student at Oakland University.

After appearing on the telethon's local segment at 1:15 p.m., Eric, even though a bit tongue-tied, said, "It was great." Eric's father, Jeff, and brother, Ryan, 14, held donations for MDA from viewers calling the Channel 2 pledge center during the telethon.

With Witherspoon, nicknamed "Spoon," Eric participates in many MD activities, including Camp Cavell near Lexington. At summer

camp, boys go fishing and play baseball with the help of MD attendants.

"He is the most polite kid I have ever met in my life," Witherspoon said. "When I yell at my older one, Eric says, 'If I could walk, I would keep my room clean,'" Sherri Meredith said. "It really makes his brother mad."

RYAN MEREDITH said he treats Eric like a "normal brother. He thinks he's good at football, but I beat him all the time." Eric went with Spoon and his family to Hawaii in February through

the national Make A Wish program, which uses donations from private corporations to give terminally ill children a chance to live out one of their wishes.

"He really got into his geography class at school and discovered there was a whole big world out there," Sherri Meredith said. "He said he wanted to go to the Red Sea and the Wall of China and Australia. We said, 'Why don't you pick something closer to home?'"

Eric earns his highest grades in math, but lunch is his favorite part of each school day.

Telethon helps families fight MD

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even \$5," said Ron Witherspoon, MDA representative. "Those kids have so much love, your heart just goes out to them."

FAMILIES WITH children who have muscular dystrophy praise MDA national chairman Lewis. His Labor Day telethons have raised \$526 million since 1966 and have prompted many people around the nation to join together in support and comfort.

"Don't be ashamed of those tears.

That's what life is all about," Lewis said to families of children with muscular dystrophy during this year's telethon.

"Without Jerry Lewis, I don't know what we would do," said Sherri Meredith, mother of Eric Meredith, 11, a Farmington Hills boy with Duchenne dystrophy.

MDA has helped families pay for medical supplies such as body braces, leg braces, motorized wheelchairs, hospital beds and vans with wheelchair lifts that are not always covered by health insurance.

Supplies for Eric's motorized wheelchair alone are costly, Sherri Meredith said. A flat tire costs \$100 and new batteries are needed every three or four months that cost \$250.

"We had our house built for him (with handicap-accessible doorways and fixtures)," Meredith said. "There are just a lot of things that MDA makes it possible for us to have."

TWO YEARS ago, a research

team supported by the MDA identified the critical muscle protein that, when missing because of a gene defect, causes Duchenne dystrophy.

Hopes were raised when doctors found that a treatment called myoblast therapy cured Duchenne dystrophy in laboratory mice.

Doctors say the treatment may be the cure for humans with Duchenne dystrophy and other muscle disorders (see related story).



BRIAN TOOVALLAN/staff photographer

Rhonda Verona of Farmington Hills serves ice cream to Charles Shepherd of West Bloomfield outside Channel 2 during the telethon on Monday.

Farmington sets funds for road-widening

Farmington has earmarked its 1989 tri-party road allocation of \$16,660 toward its share of the cost to widen Orchard Lake Road between Grand River and 10 Mile the first of two phases to improve the road all the way to I-696.

The city council allocated the tri-party funding — from the county, the road commission and the city — on Monday.

Officials of Farmington and Farmington Hills will meet with county officials on Aug. 31 to update the construction timetable for the \$4-million phase one, along the border of the two cities. Work is expected in 1990.

The three local governments will share \$500,000 in road improvement costs, including right-of-way acquisition. Farmington's share is projected

to be \$200,000, city manager Robert Deadman said.

The two cities will share another \$500,000 to install a larger drainage pipe, with Farmington's share projected to be \$300,000, Deadman said.

During phase one, Orchard Lake Road will be widened from two lanes to three to five lanes between Grand River and 10 Mile. Traffic progressively increases along the stretch,

with Shawasssee the main feeder.

During phase two, targeted to start next summer, Orchard Lake Road will be widened between 10 and 11 Mile in Farmington Hills.

Of the \$8.7 million total cost for the two phases, federal and state money will cover 75 percent. The three local governments will share the remaining 25 percent; the county's share is 12 1/2 percent.

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