

It Takes MORE THAN A VILLAGE

A spark of inspiration sets in motion an NMB fundraiser that far exceeds expectations

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD the old African proverb, “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” Well, when it came to helping a young family in northeastern Wisconsin, it took a loving and supportive family, two National Mutual Benefit branches, numerous businesses and organizations, and many caring people.

But to find the key to one of the most successful fundraisers in NMB history, you have to go back to the beginning—to the inspiration behind it all. And that inspiration came from one man’s desire to find a way to help a family in their time of great need.

Joe Gloudemans, an agent with National Mutual Benefit since April 1966, prefers not to take credit for the success of this outstanding fundraiser, emphasizing, “I had a lot of help. In fact, it is my sister, Judy Baumgart, who should be given credit for planting the initial seed.”

The Gard family—Tom, Amy, and nine-year-old Taylor—of Freedom, Wisconsin, were struggling both medically and financially. Tom, only 33 years old, had been unable to work for over two years due to declining health.

At age 16, Tom was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. In 2003, he underwent



An evening of fun, food, and entertainment begins with registration.



surgery to replace a defective heart valve. Shortly afterward, he contracted West Nile virus. Long-term complications from all these diseases have caused numerous health conditions. In 2006, Tom spent well over 100 days in the hospital. He is currently awaiting both kidney and pancreas transplants.

As Joe and his sister discussed how they could help the Gard family, Laurie Pethan, president of NMB’s Fond du Lac Branch 695, was also relating the plight of the Gards to the members of her branch. Although at this point, neither group knew what the other was doing,

that was soon to change.

The Fond du Lac branch took action by providing a monetary donation to make sure the family had a nice Christmas. Meanwhile, Joe had called Fraternal Services Manager Anne Rogers at the Home Office, asking for guidance in getting a fundraiser started.

Since Tom and Amy Gard are NMB members living in the area served by Green Bay Branch 694, Joe contacted the branch about the fundraiser. When the Gard’s fellow branch members found out about the family’s situation, they were more than willing to help. Branch



The Gard family is presented with NMB Matching Funds by District Representative Joe Gloudemans.

hard work, the Tom Gard Benefit became a reality on February 17, 2007. Joe estimates that approximately 900 people were there, including about 100 children.

Throughout the evening, there was entertainment for the adults, along with games and activities for the younger crowd. Over 500 individuals and organizations made cash donations and/or contributed prize items. Donated items included an ice-fishing shanty, a wide-screen LCD TV, a snow blower, getaway vacations, autographed Green Bay Packer prints, and homemade quilts and afghans, to name a few.

Several different auctions and raffles were held, including live and silent auctions, bucket raffles, and a stretch raffle (where you get as many tickets from a roll as you can hold with your arms outstretched—all for \$20). Joe states, “We raised over \$19,000 in the major raffle alone, plus \$7,000 in admission fees.”

Joe’s fundraising experience (his first one) shows what incredible results can be achieved when people work together toward a common benevolent goal. In this case, we have a brother/sister team who inspired a widespread network of individuals and organizations to help a young family with overwhelming medical needs and expenses.

Joe and Judy are both in awe of how much money they were able to raise and how everyone wanted to help out. “They just needed someone to step up and get things rolling,” states Joe.

If this story has inspired you and if you know of any NMB members in dire need, why not take that first step and make a phone call to your local branch or the Fraternal Services Department. Who knows, you could be the next individual to inspire MORE than a village! ♦

694 designated Matching Funds for up to \$2,500 raised, and also made a donation to the benefit fund. But the collaborative effort didn’t stop there!

As Joe, Judy, and other committee members of the Tom Gard Benefit started contacting businesses and posting flyers advertising the event, more and more people wanted to be part of the growing effort to help this family. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, the largest fraternal benefit society in the world, and the Community Benefit Tree (CBT) joined forces with NMB.

Headquartered in Kaukauna, Wis-

consin, the CBT is a not-for-profit organization that serves five counties in northeastern Wisconsin. It was established in 2004 to serve as a resource to help people in local communities who are in financial need due to a serious illness.

The CBT provides a number of services to help with fundraisers, including a Wisconsin raffle license, which was vital to making this benefit a success. Also, donations made via the CBT are fully tax deductible. It was through this organization that many large donations came in.

After two months of preparation and