

Durant girl benefits from liver donation

By Katelynn Toft

A Durant family received an organ donation for its 18-month-old daughter seven years ago, and it has forever changed their lives.

During Durant High School's Green Out basketball games in January, those attending witnessed Mrs. Suzy Bohnsack speak about the Iowa Donor Network. After her speech, Bohnsack invited Mrs. Kelsi Bullis and her daughter Emery to speak.

Mrs. Bullis and her family have been a part of the donor network since 2017 after Emery received a liver transplant. Em-



Photo contributed by Kelsi Bullis
Emery Bullis takes part in the Homecoming Parade last fall.

ery is now in second grade at Durant and as healthy as ever. That was not always the case.

Mrs. Bullis and her husband Cody noticed that when Emery was a month old, the whites of her eyes had started turning yellow. She wasn't gaining weight like she was supposed to either.

"We went to her regular doctor's appointment, and they said they were going to send us to the University of Iowa for testing," said Mrs. Bullis. After a long testing process, the family found out that Emery suffered from biliary atresia, a blockage in the tubes that take bile from the liver to the gallbladder. This is caused when those tubes do not properly develop, according to a website from Johns Hopkins Medicine.

"At that point, we knew she would need a liver transplant," said Mrs. Bullis.

Emery was put on the organ donor list when she was four months old. The family waited more than a year, from May 2016 to July 2017, for an available liver.

"It was a super long wait," said Mrs. Bullis.

Emery was first listed at the University of Iowa Stead Family Children's Hospital in Iowa City, but no transplant was available, so she was referred to a hospital in Milwaukee. After still not having any success, she was sent to Nebraska Medicine in Omaha in July 2017.

"They actually were the quickest

to get things moving for us thankfully," said Mrs. Bullis.

Emery's new liver came from a generous family who had just lost their baby and decided to donate its organs to others in need.

"It's just kind of a weird feeling I guess to know that someone else is losing their baby, and then they decide that they want to save us from that grief and basically give my baby a chance to live," said Mrs. Bullis.

Since being a Durant resident her whole life, Mrs. Bullis knew Mrs. Suzy Bohnsack as her third grade teacher.

Mrs. Bohnsack's daughter Emily died in a car accident in 2010 and is now known by many in the community as the face of the Green Out Night annual basketball game, which was started by Mrs. Bohnsack to help spread awareness for organ donation with the Iowa Donor Network.

Now Mrs. Bullis' kids get to be in the same grade as Mrs. Bohnsack's grandkids. After doing the Homecoming Parade together last fall, Mrs. Bohnsack asked Mrs. Bullis if she would want to speak at the Green Out game.

"Whenever someone reaches out and needs us to either speak or show up for events or something, we'll just go and show our support for organ donation," said Mrs. Bullis.

After her transplant, Emery



Photo contributed by Kelsi Bullis
Mrs. Kelsi Bullis speaks at Durant's Green Out Night in January as her daughter Emery watches.

changed almost immediately. Before, she was so weak that all she could do was sit and play a little. Within a couple weeks after the transplant, she began to show signs of her personality and started moving around much more.

"She was a whole new baby," said Mrs. Bullis.

Now Emery participates in dance and arts and crafts. She enjoys being with her friends and playing outside.

FAFSA From page 1

"I think it is fair to assume that the glitches are a result of the massive and significant overhaul the FAFSA form itself has undergone," she said. "Unfortunately, this has caused some delays including the opening date of the FAFSA being delayed from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31."

An eastern Iowa student service advisor, Lupe Hernandez, works for a non-profit education group called Iowa College Access Network (ICAN). The goal of the organization is to help students with their plans after high school.

ICAN hosted FAFSA Completion Events in January at nearby Wilton and West Liberty schools shortly after the FAFSA website was officially launched.

"When the website was launched in January, there were a lot of technical glitches with the platform," said Ms. Hernandez. "At times the website didn't recognize certain users, or a person couldn't proceed to the next page or submit the application."

"As the weeks have gone by, the technical glitches have been less, but there's still families that are having to call Federal Student Aid for assistance with problems with the website."

Ms. Hernandez said that several delays have slowed down the FAFSA process this year.

"The FAFSA is usually available to file in October," she said. "This year it was delayed to December 31st. It was then announced that the FAFSAs that were filed were not going to be processed until the end of January. Mid-January it was announced that FAFSAs were going to be processed starting mid-March due to adjustments to the FAFSA formula."

Ms. Hernandez said that colleges have been very understanding about FAFSA issues this year. They are aware that families are frustrated and know that the problem with the financial aid process is out of the families' control.

Ms. Jess Graham, the assistant director of service operations and outreach for the University of Iowa's student financial aid office, said in an interview in late February that the university is unable to offer specific aid packages right now.

"Our timeline has had to shift to accommodate the lack of FAFSA information we have received," she said. "Without FAFSA information, we cannot create aid offers

for students. We have to review the information that was entered into the FAFSA and then generate offers."

Ms. Graham said the university can still work with students and families to go over the general financial aid process and federal aid programs.

"But we cannot be specific about their personal federal aid eligibility," she said.

Despite the FAFSA delays, Mrs. Rush said the EICC colleges, including Muscatine, Scott, and Clinton, will still be able to offer financial aid to students.

"We know that the financial aid offers may be delayed, but we will work diligently to ensure students aid packages are ready as soon as possible," said Mrs. Rush.

Locally, Mrs. Paper said that she has used online resources to help her with the application, including the customer service center with Federal Student Aid.

As part of the application process, students and parents must create their own separate FAFSA IDs. Mrs. Paper navigated that part of the process and other steps along the way but was unable to finish it entirely.

"This is always a time-consuming

application to begin with and then to not be able to complete, it is frustrating," she said.

Senior Nic Poston is applying to the University of Dubuque and also struggled with filling out his FAFSA form. He is worried that colleges aren't getting the information that they need to provide good financial aid for students.

Ms. Graham had one final piece of advice for parents and students.

"Do your best to stay informed," she said. "Remain patient. All students across the United States are in the same boat when it comes to receiving financial aid offers for the upcoming academic year." Despite the problems, there is some good news.

"Not only has the FAFSA form changed, but the methodology and measure that is used to determine eligibility has also changed," said Mrs. Rush, indicating that more students will be eligible for federal Pell Grants under the new formulas.

She also said the Department of Education is working hard to fix the issues as quickly as possible.

"There is a good chance that the process will be much smoother come 2025-2026," she said.

Raynor Door's girls' track athlete of the month



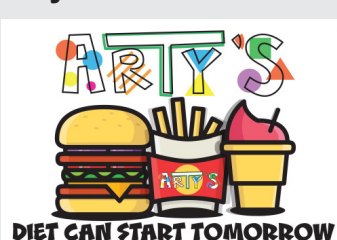
2370 West Lake Blvd.
Davenport, IA 52804
563.391.9566 – phone
www.raynorqc.com

Senior Kennedy Schumacher has been competing in track for three years and got into the sport because her mom grew up in the sport and got her to try it out her sophomore year. Schumacher enjoys seeing her hard work pay off. Her goal this season is to dominate at the state track meet, and her favorite memory was winning five meets last season.



Schumacher

Arty's Ice Cream and Grill's boys' track athlete of the month



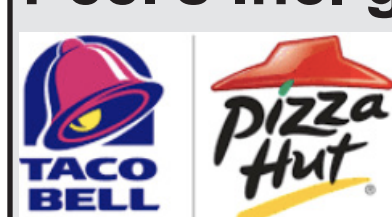
609 W. 5th St.
Wilton, IA 52778
563-732-2222

Sophomore Colby Gast has been competing in track since the eighth grade. He got into the sport because of his friends and Coach Cody Wille. What Gast enjoys most about the sport is the competitiveness and the thrill he gets when running. He also enjoys the relationships that he has built with his teammates.



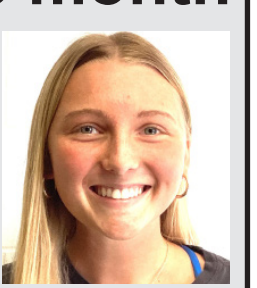
Gast

Peel's Inc. golfer of the month



755 W. Iowa 80 Road
Walcott, IA 52773
(563) 468-5460

Junior Lauren Callison has been playing golf for most of her life. She got into the sport because she enjoyed watching it as a kid, so she ended up trying it and enjoying it. Also, Callison loves the competitiveness that comes with golf.



Callison

Apex Ink and Apparel's junior high athlete of the month



708 5th St., Durant, IA 52747
563-785-6223

Eighth grader Arley Starr is competing on the girls' track team for her second year. She got into the sport because it got her out of her comfort zone. Starr enjoys the different variety of events that she can participate in, but she also enjoys having fun with friends.



Starr