

**FUNDRAISER:** Despite their own hardship, the Vervoordeldonk family wants to raise funds to help Children's Hospital



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After their house burned down while the oldest son was being operated on for cancer, the Vervoordeldonk family is giving back, organizing a fundraiser for the cancer ward at Children's Hospital through the sale of pumpkins, small hay bales and corn stalks. The sale will take place tomorrow at the Dorchester Community Centre. The Vervoordeltons, from left, are Trevor, 7, Jeffrey, 11, Matthew, 6, and father John.

## Grateful family keen to give back

BY JOHN MINER  
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Their house burned down, their 14-year-old son is battling cancer and they're living in a trailer.

The Vervoordeldonk family is holding a fundraiser tomorrow — but it's not for them.

The Belmont-area farm family, with help from friends and neighbours, is selling straw bales, corn stalks, pumpkins and other fall decorations with all of the money going to the cancer ward at Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre.

The event is scheduled for tomorrow from noon to 4 p.m. in Dorchester at the commu-



**VIDEO:** Hear the family's story. Click on Videos at [lfpres.com](http://lfpres.com)

nity centre.

"It is just something we wanted to do," said John Vervoordeldonk, adding the idea started with his son Jeff.

"My boy came home one day and he wanted to know what he could do for his brother," he said.

The family had harvested about 1,000 small straw bales this summer and planned to sell them for income. Instead, they decided to donate them or raise money for the hospital where their son Anthony was being treated for cancer.

Vervoordeldonk said his

friend John Podeszwa has organized tomorrow's event.

Anyone who'd like to donate fall decorations can call Podeszwa at 519-644-0113 or drop the donations off at the community centre an hour before the event, he said.

The Vervoordeldonk's house burned Sept. 3 when they were at the hospital for Anthony's cancer operation.

Vervoordeldonk said that day they'd been told the surgery had gone well, but there was a problem with Anthony's reaction to the anesthetic and his chances of pulling through were only 50-50.

When he was called aside at the hospital, Vervoordeldonk

expected he'd be told his son had died. Instead, the news was that the family home was engulfed in flames.

"It was unimaginable. It is something you don't want to wish on anybody," he said.

Vervoordeldonk said the community support and help has been amazing, from help with his crops to a trailer supplied by the Salvation Army.

"I will never drive through this community and think of it the same way again," he said.

Anthony has been doing well and is receiving chemotherapy treatment, Vervoordeldonk said.

*John Miner is a Free Press health reporter.*