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COMMUNITY



Greg
Ferguson,
Bill Sweet,
Cary Poole
and
daughter
Charlotte,
Matthew
Poole and
Elizabeth,
Barb Sweet
and Bob
Barker.

Credit Valley Shriners/photo

Credit Valley Shrine Club helps Georgetown girl find right fit for scoliosis treatment

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Georgetown resident Cary Poole took her eightyear-old daughter Elizabeth to see a doctor upon realizing she had scoliosis, only to be told what many patients with scoliosis hear regularly: to wait until the condition progresses.

As Poole began her yearand-a-half wait for an appointment with McMaster Children's Hospital, she sought chiropractic help and massage therapy, while doing her own research to discover alternate ways of treating her daughter.

When the day finally arrived for the appointment, the McMaster surgeon recommended that Elizabeth have growing rod surgery, where rods would be inserted on each side of her spine to straighten her curvature as she continues to develop.

The growing rod would require additional surgeries every six months to lengthen the rods as Elizabeth grows, with a final spinal fusion procedure completed once she is fully developed.

However, Poole didn't think this option was necessarily the right choice for her active daughter who plays on a number of sports teams including the North Halton Twisters and the Bulldogs Girls Field Lacrosse team.

Through her research

Poole was connected to the Credit Valley Shrine Club who offered to help.

"There was a family who was involved in the Masons and was a part of the Shriners organization, they called me and said, "The Shriners actually help children with scoliosis and I would like you to come and talk to somebody and see if we could help you out that way," she said. "We had no idea that the Shriners actually did this type of work."

Poole filled out an application and received a call shortly after. The Shriners agreed to sponsor Elizabeth and set up an appointment for her to see the surgeon at Shriners Hospital for Children in Philadelphia.

At the hospital, Poole learned her daughter could receive a non-invasive surgery called "vertebrae body tethering." The Shriners would help with transportation, as well as funding for accommodations, food and the surgery itself.

Elizabeth, now 10 years old, underwent surgery in May. A day later she was up and walking, Poole said.

"Four weeks post op she was given the OK by the surgeon to go ahead and return to daily activities," she add-

Greg Ferguson of the Credit Valley Shrine Club says it is stories like Elizabeth's that makes him proud to be a part of the organizaion.

"I am glad to be able to get kids like Elizabeth all fixed up," he said, adding that a lot of people may not know that the Shriners help those with orthopedic injuries and conditions.

"She's not where she was before obviously ... but she's running around an playing sports right now and being a normal kid and we forget sometimes what we've gone through for the past six months," Poole said.

"We feel very blessed that this has all fallen into place for us and that she is slowly getting back to her regular activities and the thought is that perhaps she will be better than she was previously."

Poole says parents who are weighing their options for their own children who have scoliosis should continue to do their research and look for procedures that are best suited for them.

"If you feel that a certain pathway isn't going to work, then look for different opinions," she said, adding that speaking to other families with similar struggles has been beneficial.

"Surgery is not always the (best) treatment ... you just have to find something that works for your family and your child."

For further information on the Credit Valley Shrine Club, visit http://www.rameses-shriners.ca/credit.htm.