

# Jamaican youngster hoping to stand tall with assistance from Georgetown friends

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Unfortunately, the delays had cost them their appointment, but the doctors agreed to meet them the following week.

The travel visas came in and Val booked flights for Margaret and Michael to travel to Montreal on February 11. The doctors agreed—it was a go.

The first operation was performed in April, to cut and lengthen Michael's tendons in his ankles, knees and hips. It was followed with extensive rehab and physio and Michael also needed expensive braces to get him through this phase of the ordeal. The Shriners decided to help out, and donated

the costs—about \$6,000 worth.

In addition, the Shriners also waived their rule to not provide education to out of country patients. Michael is now attending school, thanks to the Shriners.

Sheridan also loaned him a laptop, so he can keep on top of his studies, as well as learn computer skills.

Michael suffered a setback when doctors discovered he had fluid on his spine and brain. A shunt was surgically implanted in August, adding another \$20,000 to the cost of his treatment.

"He's now getting ready for the back operation," said Karl. "We hope that will take place in January or February of 2007, and the prognosis is good. After that, Michael should be able to walk upright and carry on a fairly normal life."

Valerie is in touch with the hospital every Friday, keeping tabs on Michael's progress and supporting Margaret.

This past weekend, Karl and Valerie visited Michael and Margaret, and were joined by Ron who returned to Glen Williams with Valerie and Karl Sunday.

A fundraiser—called Stand Up For Michael—is now in high gear to raise the funds Sheridan has put up-front.

"Sheridan is donating \$20,000 to the cause," said Karl, "and the employees have also raised another \$30,000-plus through various fundraisers.

"We decided to hold a 50-50 draw, but to do so, required charitable status. Rev. Grahame Stap of St. Alban's in the Glen offered the help of the church, so they are

administrating the 50-50 draw. It's a perfect solution—every penny raised by the draw will go toward Michael's fund, as there are no administration costs involved."

To date, with about \$30,000 worth of tickets sold, the 50-50 draw already has a win potential of \$15,000. If all tickets are sold, the winner could walk away with a total of \$30,000. Ticket sales will end November 30, and the draw will be made December 4 at Sheridan Nurseries in Glen Williams.

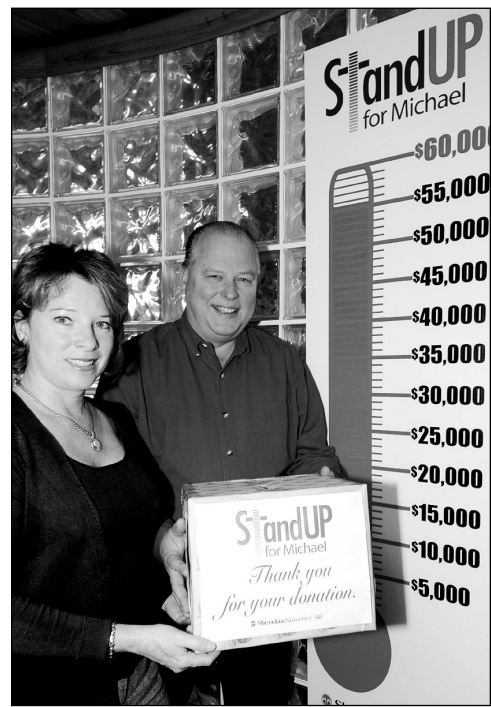
Tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20 and are available at Sheridan's head office on the Tenth Line, at McMaster's Meats on Main Street Georgetown, The Glen Oven Bake Shop on Main Street, Glen Williams and at Mattina's Cucina on Mountainview Road N.

If anyone misses the 50-50 draw, they can also donate directly to the fund, by dropping by Sheridan's office.

In addition, Sheridan Nurseries has a 'Round-up for Michael' campaign in place, asking customers at their retail outlets if they want to round up their purchase to the next dollar to donate to Michael. Karl says the response has been overwhelming.

"In total, we have a target of about \$100,000 to cover Michael's medical costs," said Karl, "If we go over the \$100,000 mark, we'll simply donate the extra to Michael to take back to Jamaica with him, to make his life better there—for education, personal needs, or whatever he needs."

Whatever the outcome, through the generosity of a local company and some caring people within it, Michael's life is already much better than any of his family ever



Val and Karl Stensson of Sheridan Nurseries, take time to check the progress of the Stand Up for Michael campaign, which is now in full swing, to raise funds to pay for the 13-year-old Jamaican boy's corrective surgery.

Photo by Ted Brown

dreamed it would be.

After visiting Michael this past weekend in Montreal, the Stenssons have nothing but praise for the care he is receiving during his rehab at Shriners Hospital.

"Val and I had an incredible experience at the Shriners Hospital," said Karl. "It was an amazing hospital with the friendliest and most caring staff I have ever seen. It has motivated us to actually try a fundraising effort next year to thank them for everything they have done for Michael."



Ron Campbell visits with his son Michael in Shriners Hospital, Montreal.

Photo courtesy Karl and Val Stensson

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Child abuse is a far-reaching problem that affects children of all ages, socioeconomic levels and ethnicities. It is every adult's responsibility to help stop child abuse by reporting suspected abuse or neglect. If you believe a child has been harmed, or is in danger of being harmed, call your local department of children and family services or your local police department. If you are a parent, do your best to provide a nurturing, loving home environment for your child. If you need help doing this, there are resources to help you - look online or in the phone book, or ask for assistance through your church or your child's school. If we all do our part to prevent child abuse, we'll get to the heart of the matter.