

# Arts & Entertainment

## Concert to help ill-stricken local infant

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**  
The Champion

The world can seem like a rather dismal place when your one-year-old son — your first and only child — is diagnosed with an extremely rare and devastating disease.

It can also seem beautiful — especially when people you've never met surround you with sustaining love and support.

It's a paradox that's been particularly evident lately to Peter and Melissa Papaioannou, owners of Campbellville's Trail Eatery.

It was just three months ago that their son, Michael, was diagnosed with Lesch-Nyhan Disease (LND), a rare disorder caused by a genetic mutation of the X chromosome. He's one of the youngest people in the world to be diagnosed, his father said.

Michael was diagnosed by specialists in Boston, and it was just as the young husband and wife were trying to wrap their minds around the news that they were approached by area resident Donna Danielli. She'd heard about the couple's plight and wanted to help.

"We can't help with the diagnosis. That's in God's hands. But why don't we help you with the finances?"

That's what Ms Danielli said she remembers asking Mr. Papaioannou.

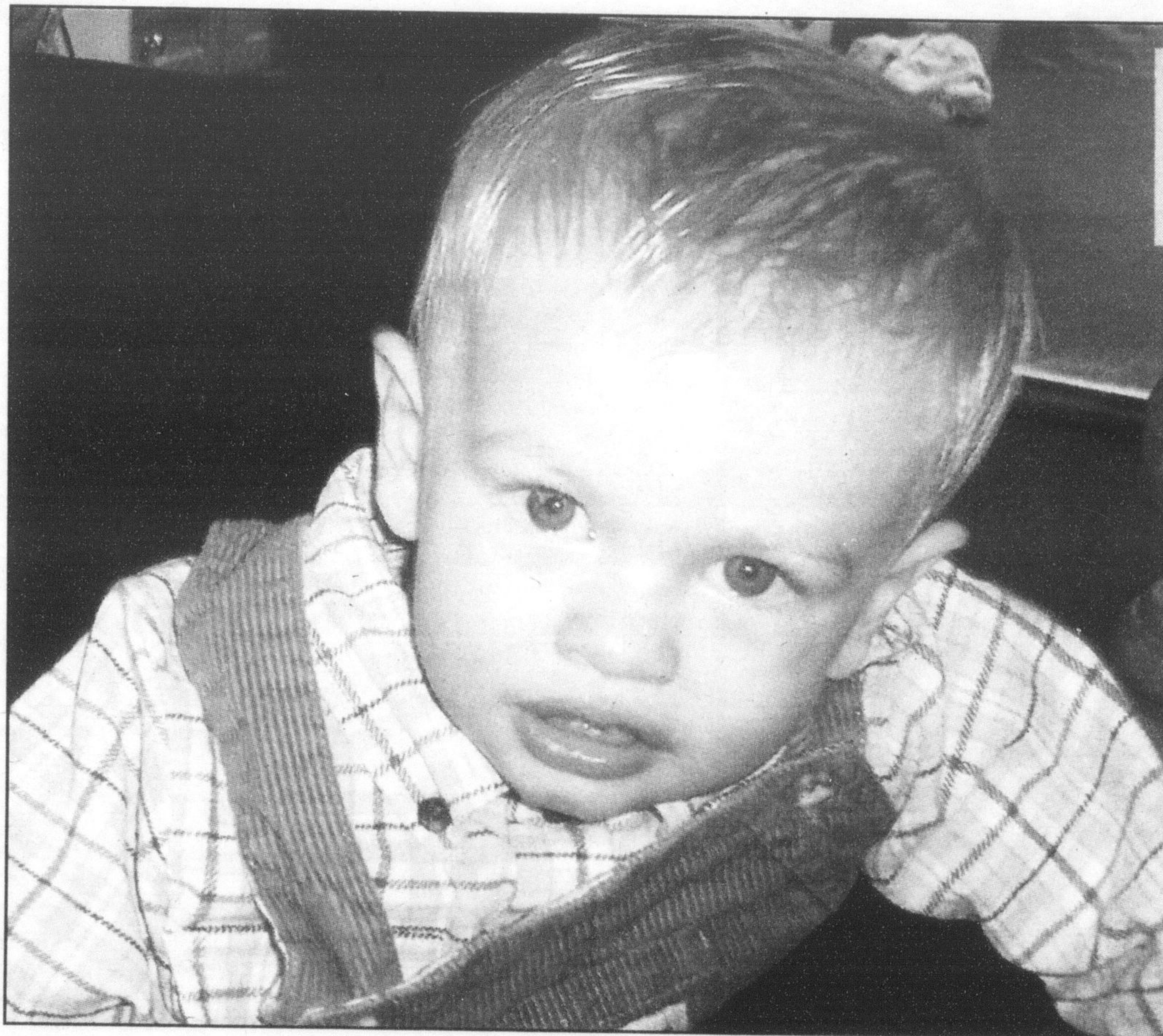
That heartfelt offer was the beginning of an endeavour that quickly snowballed. What started as a small fundraising concert eventually became a completely sold-out night of dinner and music. The event will take place tomorrow in the Gambrel barn at Country Heritage Park. Not only have all 400 tickets been sold, there's a 50-person waiting list.

Ms Danielli said as soon as she began making phone calls about the concert, it was clear there were scores of people wanting to help.

The generous community response has left the Papaioannous almost speechless.

"It's phenomenal. I can't believe the community support," Mr. Papaioannou said, struggling for words.

"It's a wonderful feeling that the community has come together to help our little



One-year-old Michael Papaioannou of Campbellville — who suffers from Lesch Nyhan Disease (LND) — will be aided by a fundraising concert at Country Heritage Park tomorrow.

boy."

People with LND suffer from a wide variety of symptoms, and the severity differs from patient to patient. Renal dysfunction and a range of neurological abnormalities, including compulsive self injury, are among the symptoms that characterize the disease.

At this point, Michael doesn't have any of the behavioural difficulties or self-injuring tendencies, Ms Papaioannou said. However, the 14-month-old has the motor skills of a newborn. He can't hold a bottle, and just recently sat up for the first time on his own.

Most likely, he'll never walk. Since the disease is so rare, the Papaioannous will be traveling back and forth to a San Diego research facility.

"We decided to pursue this in the States, • see PROCEEDS on page B2

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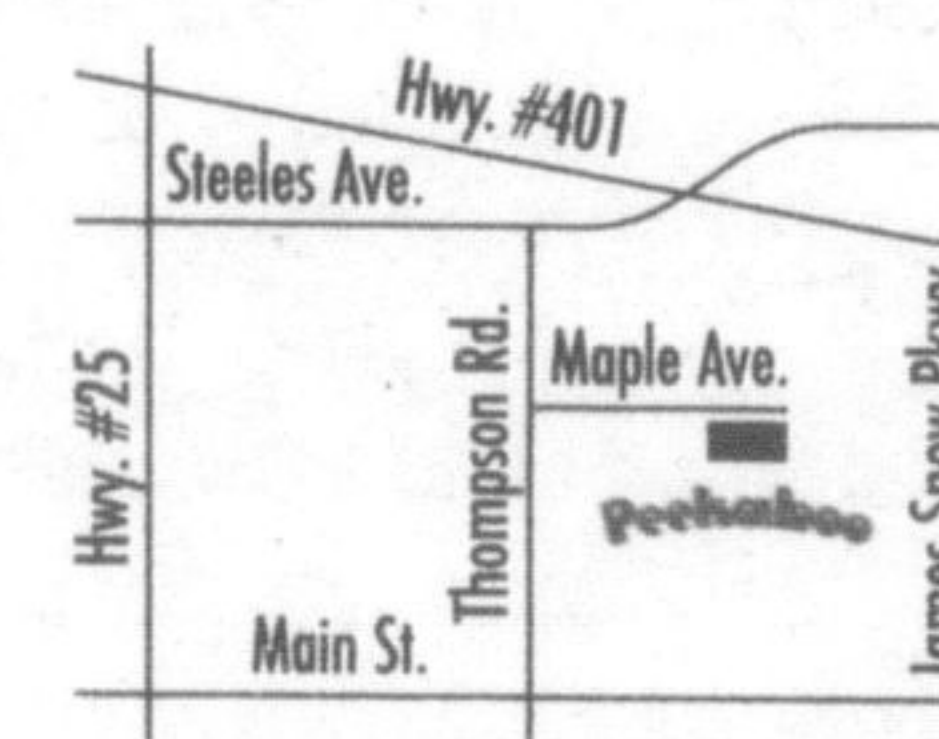
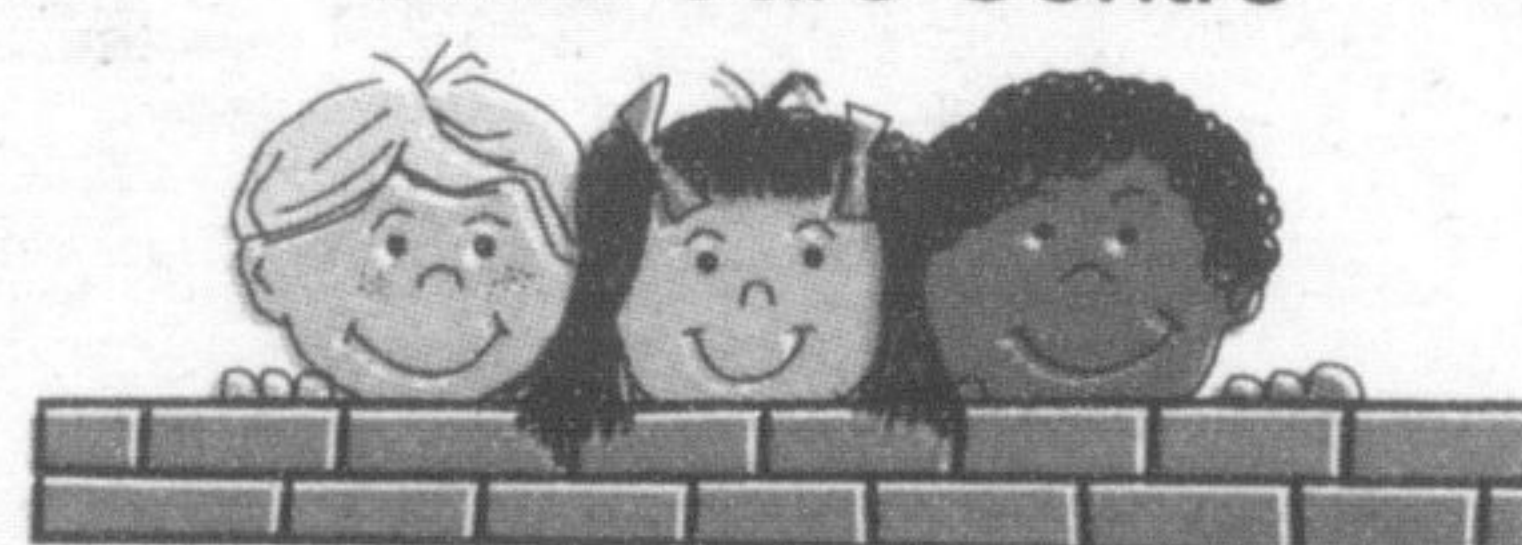
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