

The Lake Orion **REVIEW**

Thinking Positive **Cancer patient / family enjoy Disney World** **thanks to a Detroit Lion Player**

BY LISA VALENTINE
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To witness Zachary Shaffer's smiling face and positive outlook on life, you would never know the 21-year-old Lake Orion resident was battling glioblastoma multiforme (GBM), the most common and clinically aggressive brain cancer. Shaffer survived a bout with astrocytoma brain cancer when he was nine years old, and the doctors thought he was cured for life until a different tumor, this time GBM, was discovered last April.

"I went back to Children's Hospital in Detroit where I was treated the first time," he said. "Everyone thought my baby (9 1/2 month old Emmaline) was the patient."

Shaffer and his wife Samantha are both natives of Lake Orion, and Shaffer graduated from Lake Orion High School in 2002. They said dealing with Shaffer's illness hasn't been easy, as he has been unable to work since being diagnosed last April. "I was driving truck for Tire Wholesalers," he said. "I had 30 days to go on my probation period, then I would have had a 401(k) plan...when I got sick." But the family had a temporary break from their troubles when they were sent on an all expenses-paid trip to Walt Disney World in Florida. Damien Woody of the Detroit Lions wanted to send a family who was affected by cancer to Disney World," Shaffer explained. "It was in conjunction with the Rosemary A. Hockney Memorial Foundation. Our social worker at the hospital gave (Woody) my name."

The Hockney Foundation was started last June by Mike Hockney, in memory of his mother Rosemary, who died of colorectal cancer. The organization is non-profit and provides assistance to children of families whose lives have been affected by cancer.

"I haven't been able to pay the bills, let alone go to Disney World," Shaffer said. Shaffer, Samantha, Emmaline and Shaffer's sister Olivia, 20, visited Disney World Jan. 3-7, staying at Disney's Polynesian Resort. "We found out about the trip just before Christmas," said Shaffer. "My mom called me, crying, and said 'Do you want to go to Disney World?' She didn't even know who Damien Woody was." The Shaffers were able to visit with Woody, an offensive lineman, and his wife Nicole at the Lions' practice facility in Allen Park.

"We got to meet all the Lions," said Samantha. "It was really nice." "I'm a big guy, and he's actually bigger than me," Shaffer said. At Disney World, the park's monorail went right through their hotel, and Shaffer said he had a hard time walking the first three days before he discovered the "Amigo carts."

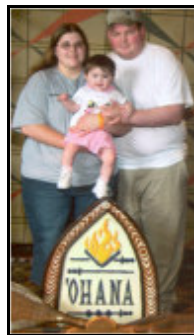
"I loved the Haunted Mansion," he said. "Me and Emmy liked Dumbo," said Samantha. They attended an island luau at their hotel, where they were amazed by the size. "It was the only hotel I ever stayed in where I needed a map to find my

room," said Shaffer, adding that there were areas representing all the Polynesian islands.

"I think there are a lot more people that are able to do this, who need to, instead of using (the money) for (something) like a new car," he said.

Shaffer said he is deeply religious, and his faith in God is the main thing getting him through this tough time. "I believe there are angels put on earth," he said of Woody.

So far in his treatment, Shaffer has had dime-sized discs that release chemotherapy planted in his brain, undergone radiation treatment, and systemic chemotherapy, having it injected through his veins. "I'm now taking chemotherapy medication that is four weeks on, one week off, then four weeks on again," he said. "My dad had Leukemia when I was six...He actually used the drug I started out with, except at this time it's so potent, if you touched it to your skin, it would burn it." One week's worth of the pills Shaffer needs to take costs \$2,000. He said they have gotten some assistance from their church, Community of Christ, but are in need of a new vehicle and a new place to live, as they currently live in a small one-bedroom apartment.



"I was working on getting my EMT license and getting on the fire department," Shaffer said. "I got sick the week after my daughter was born. "When I got sick, we were looking to buy a house," he said. "Now we're in a dinky one-bedroom apartment. We're looking to at least get a bigger apartment." "We spent our first wedding anniversary in ICU," added Samantha.

Last April, Shaffer was told he was expected to live for 2-4 months, "GBM is more aggressive," he said. "Most people who have it die. It's like I'm beating the odds." Shaffer said he was able to get some disability payments, which has "helped tremendously." "It's been really rough," Samantha said. "It's just been tough," agreed Shaffer. "But it's not the first time I've been pressed with a challenge in my life."

Shaffer is very grateful for the support of his family. "The day I was diagnosed...by 12:30 p.m., it looked like a family reunion," he said. "If I was going to say goodbye, it'd be all at once." Shaffer describes his illness as a "kick in the stomach." "I don't think I stopped praying for five minutes," he said. "When I was in the hospital, there were a lot of nights I was alone. It gets to you." On their having a positive attitude, Samantha said "You have to be. What else can you do?" "The moment you let yourself be beat, is when it beats you," Shaffer said. "Attitude is 75 percent of the fight. "I'm really glad we live in such a small community," he said. "Everyone who hears the story has opened up their arms."

Shaffer has been given clearance to start doing some work again, and is looking for a part-time job. He also hopes to be able to pursue his dream of becoming an EMT or police officer. If anyone would like to help the Shaffer family, they can contact Zachary's mother Linda at 693-6753.

For more information on the Rosemary A. Hockney Memorial Foundation, visit www.rosehockneyfoundation.com, or contact Mike Hockney at (586) 783-7738.