

LIFESTYLES

'Augie's Angels' event Saturday

By Jon Earnest
Sanger Herald

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Sanger resident Maria Soto is hoping the generosity of the community can help provide much-needed medical treatment for her 18-year-old son Augie.

Diagnosed at age 11 with Cornelia De Lange Syndrome (CdLs), a rare genetic disease which occurs in just 1 in 30,000 births, Augie is currently on a waiting list for treatment at John Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, Md. To raise money for a trip that could materialize at any time in the future, a special fundraiser titled "Augie's Angels" will take place this Saturday night at 2415 Almond Ave. in Sanger.

Tickets are priced at \$25 per person, and about 20-25 remain of the original 200 which went on sale. The set goal is to raise \$20,000, but Maria wants to at least reach a money level of \$11,500 to cover the travel expenses of driving back east and up to a six-month stay in the area.

"I knew something was wrong" when Augie was born, Soto said, as he wasn't hitting the developmental milestones through his infant and toddler years. Many of his learning and behavioral issues were initially diagnosed to autism, and these issues eventually grew to injurious and abusive behavior.

Augie was seen by his third geneticist at age 11, and the CdLs diagnosis fit the description of his medical symptoms. As Augie's gotten older the severe social anxiety and selfinjurious behavior increase to where he has almost become fully homebound. He has undergone numerous hospital stays over the past five years, spending a total of 380 days during that period at Children's Hospital Central California.

Soto discovered the John Hopkins program last year, and has been working since September to get Augie into the neuro-behavioral unit which deals with the most abusive patients. She said following a two-week assessment, a pediatrician would spend time undergoing full assessment of Augie, retraining him to deal with life stresses and providing round-the-clock in patient care.

Maria would have to relocate to Maryland for anywhere from four to six months, being available close by for social interaction and taking part in community outings. She would live at a Ronald McDonald House in the area at a cost of \$15 daily, and is responsible for all her and Augie's own travel expenses. Those travel expenses are renting a car and driving, as Augie is unable to fly, and Maria will also have to be unemployed while she's back east.

Maria is thankful for the community support already received; she said Fermin's Steakhouse is providing the catered dinner at a significant discount.

Anyone wishing to provide any financial support to Augie can donate to the local Citibank branch to Account No. 42007430327, or make a check payable to Maria Victoria Soto and mail to Felix R. Garza, PO Box 538, Sanger CA 93657. Garza will be helping Maria with her household expenses while she is in Maryland.

Ticket information is available by calling Maria at 250-1966 or Queta at 999-7561.

The reporter can be contacted at earnestfeats@gmail.com or by phone at 875-2511.



Jon Earnest / Sanger Herald Maria Soto poses with her napping son Augie, 18, at their Sanger home on Tuesday afternoon. Augie is battling Cornelia De Lange Syndrome, a rare genetic disease that affects 1 in 30,000 births.