

Custom Rifle in Raffle for Reagan

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Reagan Tala was born in Lakeland with a rare genetic disorder that requires around-the-clock care and frequent trips to the Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women & Babies in Orlando.

Now 7 months old, Reagan is the son of Bobby Tala and Julicia Graham of Lakeland.

"They're a young couple just starting off, and the unexpected occurred," said Sallie Henry of Lakeland, Reagan's grandmother.

Henry said the disorder, called Cornelia De Lange Syndrome, affects vision, hearing and mental ability, as well as growth deficiency, limb malformation and digestive disorders.

"He's doing good. He's a little trouper," Henry said.

"Actually, he's going above and beyond most expectations we were given when he was born," she said. "He's beating a lot of the odds."

To help the family with ongoing medical and financial needs, the Natural High Adventures Fishing Club in Polk County is holding a raffle for a customized Remington rifle.

The Remington Model 700 BDL in 300 Win Mag with a stainless steel barrel was customized by Roy Williamson at Crossroads Gun Shop in Dade City.

Ron Tomlin of Lakeland, a club officer, said the rifle is valued at about \$1,600.

Raffle tickets are \$5 each or five for \$20. The drawing is April 24 at the Marine Supply Spring Event in Winter Haven, and you don't have to be present to win.

Reagan is the couple's first child, the third grandchild of Sallie and Tim Henry.

"We're head over heels over this baby," Sallie said.

The family has tremendous out-of-pocket expenses and needs help. Only Bobby works, in the Publix distribution center, because Julicia cares full-time for Reagan. He has to be tube-fed every four hours.

Reagan is one of just 2,500 cases in the nation with the disorder.

Sallie Henry said the family was shocked because Reagan was a full-term baby and apparently healthy.

"This is something that we had no idea was coming," Sallie said. "Julicia had four ultra-sounds, and they all came back normal."

Williamson said the rifle is perfect for hunting deer, elk or moose. He customized it with a fluted barrel and fluted bolt that cuts down on weight and drag, along with a muzzle blast deflector and muzzle brake.

Williamson, also a club member, owns the patent for the muzzle blast deflector. He

said anyone with questions about the rifle can call him at 863-797-7807.

Tim Henry, an avid outdoorsman and club member, is helping sell raffle tickets. Call him at MacDonald Construction at 863-581-9957 or 863-646-5763, or e-mail him at thentry@mcconst.com.

Raffle tickets are also available from Devin Edwards at Marine Supply in Winter Haven (863-412-2395) and Ron Schelfo at Ron's Tackle Box in Lake Alfred (863-956-4990).

[Del Milligan's outdoors column appears Fridays in The Ledger. He can be reached at del.milligan@theledger.com or 863-802-7555. Milligan's blog, Central Florida Fishology, can be found at www.polkoutdoors.com.]

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