

LAKE-NOXEN CLASS OF 1958 HOLDS REUNION



Members of the Class of 1958 of Lake-Noxen High School gathered for their 50th anniversary reunion on August 9. Those in attendance include, from left, first row, Jack Rauch, Mary Charles McHose Wallace, Bob McGovern and Isabelle Sorber Butler. Second row, Connie Smith Baradzlej, Sandy Engleman McGovern, Thelma Dougl Leach, Sandy Morris Swingle and Hazel Sickler St. Clair. Absent at the time of the photo was Mike Bielecki.

VOLUNTEERS JOIN FOOD PANTRY OPERATION



The Back Mountain Food Pantry Board of Directors announces four individuals who have volunteered their time and management expertise to assist with the daily operation of the food pantry. From left, Mark Stull, senior manager; Anna Skrosky, associate manager; the Rev. Lori Steffensen, newly-appointed pastor at Trucksville United Methodist Church which houses the food pantry; and Joe Hardisky, chairman of the board of directors. The food pantry has been serving those in need in the Back Mountain for more than 30 years.

CHALLENGES

Continued from Page 6

walked upstairs at school to eat lunch when she told the building's speech pathologist she didn't feel well.

As Finarelli complained of being dizzy and having a wet, warm sensation in the back of her head, she started to slur her speech. The school nurse tried to help her into a wheelchair, but Finarelli lost control of her left side and couldn't stand.

Minutes later, Finarelli remembers paramedics placing her on a gurney and rushing her to an ambulance.

"I thought, 'My God, this must be serious; we're running in the parking lot,'" she recalled.

On the way to Anne Arundel Medical Center, the soon-to-be mother began to have seizures. A CAT scan of her brain showed a five centimeter bleed, causing her to have a stroke and to seize.

In the next few minutes, doctors performed an emergency Cesarean section to remove the baby.

"We better take this baby or we're going to lose both of them," Finarelli remembers obstetrician Marcus Penn saying to neurosurgeon Timothy Burke.

Finarelli also recalls seeing her husband at the foot of her bed before she was whisked away to surgery. As Michael Finarelli embraced his wife, she moaned from the intense pain.

"The absolute worst part was when I arrived in the emergency room and saw a cluster of activity working frantically around her," Michael said. "I knew how serious it was and that her life and his life (the baby's) were in jeopardy, yet there was nothing I could do about it."

After baby Michael was delivered prematurely and placed in the neonatal unit, his mother underwent brain surgery. Doctors kept her in a medically-induced coma for four days to con-



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Conor Harrington, left, 17, of Dallas, recently won an essay contest in which he was to pay half of his prize money forward. Harrington chose to give the money to the John Heinz Institute in honor of his former teacher, Beth Finarelli, right, and his grandfather, John Burns, who both underwent rehabilitation at the institute for a stroke. Finarelli is holding her son, Michael, with whom she was pregnant when she suffered a stroke.

rol the swelling in her brain.

Finarelli believes that, while she was in the coma, her best friend, Erin Hammond, who had died six months earlier, appeared to her.

According to Finarelli, Hammond said, "You can't die. You have a beautiful baby and he needs you. I just saw him."

Finarelli remembers saying, "OK" and then woke up. She believes it was Hammond who saved her life.

When she first saw her baby, Finarelli didn't believe he was hers because he was hooked up to many tubes and she did not remember delivering him. Nurses let her hold the baby not long after she came out of her coma, but the new mother was still in denial. So, a Web cam was placed in the baby's nursery and so his mother could look at him.

Little Michael Finarelli spent seven and a half weeks in the hospital and went home just a few days before his mother was released from the hospital.

Around Christmas time 2007, the family moved in with Beth's parents, Bill and Joan Abrams, of Dallas so she could receive more advanced rehabilitation

locally at John Heinz Institute and so her parents and in-laws, Tom and Karen Finarelli, also of Dallas, could help care for the baby while she recovers.

In her journey of recovery, Finarelli undergoes physical therapy three days a week for three hours at a time. She also receives occupational therapy and speech therapy for cognitive problems caused by the stroke. Surprisingly, she did not lose her ability to speak and is still fluent in three languages - English, Spanish and French.

"When I first came here (to the John Heinz Institute), I couldn't use my arm at all," she said. "Now I have everything back from my elbow to my hand."

Finarelli recently shared her story at the 2008 Anne Arundel Medical Center Foundation Gala in Baltimore, Md. The gala raised more than \$720,000 to help stroke patients and those with other debilitating diseases.

"It's amazing how life can change in the blink of an eye," she said.

Rebecca Bria, a staff writer for The Dallas Post, can be reached at 970-7436.

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