

Foster...from Page 1A

and shop for the children.

It's not hard to imagine what presents under the tree might mean to a child in foster care, one who wakes up every day confused about why they can't be with their loved ones.

Fortunately, there are organizations like the Nam Knights of America, which assists veterans, law enforcement, firefighters and the community.

The Nam Knights is an American military veteran and law enforcement motorcycle club, and the local chapter is headed by Guy Novembre.

Novembre and his wife, Rosemarie, learned about the Foster Children's Christmas Program after reading a call for donations in the North Georgia News.

They liked the thought of helping foster kids at Christmas so much that they brought the idea to the rest of the Nam Knights, and everybody jumped on board to collectively buy

gifts for 10 of the nearly 150 foster children who benefited from the program this year.

"We were surprised to find out there were so many foster children in Towns and Union counties," said Novembre. "This was a great experience ... I just wish there weren't so many. It's sad."

Continued Novembre: "There are just so many different things going on here, the members of the club and I were afraid that this (program) would get lost, that not all the kids would get covered. Well, we jumped in, and we'll do the same next year."

Many others contributed this year, and have in year's past, including Sharp Memorial United Methodist Church, United Community Bank of Hiwassee, Woods Grove Baptist Church, Union County 4-H, the Union County Library and Enotah CASA.

Bonnie Herman made three dresses by hand; TATA on

Main donated jewelry for girls; several people donated bicycles for youngsters craving two-wheeled adventures; and the Foster Children's Christmas Program was able to raise enough money to purchase a number of laptops to expand the horizons of children away from home.

"I think of foster kids as children who got caught in a bad situation, and that's not their fault," said one donor, who preferred to give anonymously. "If the community can help a foster child or foster children become who they were meant to be, that is something that we should always want to strive to do. They didn't have a choice, and we can help them have a better choice."

The Towns & Union Foster Children's Enrichment Program is made up primarily of former and current CASAs who understand that there will always be a need.

Monetary donations are

accepted year-round for the Christmas program, and those interested in contributing or becoming sponsors for next Christmas can contact Pat Elliott at (706) 896-3749, or Richard Paolillo at (706) 745-1190.

For convenience, donors can make checks payable to "The Foster Children's Christmas Program," and the checks can be dropped off at Park Sterling Bank for deposit.

Donations can also be made toward the program's Back to School initiative, which is the other area of concentration for the Enrichment Program aimed at normalizing the experiences of children in foster care.

The Back to School part of the program takes place before the start of each school year. Foster children are given the ability to go shopping for new school supplies and a new school outfit, just like all the other kids who start school



Guy and Rosemarie Novembre with Pam Curley and Lorena Johnson. The Novembre's were dropping off a bunch of gifts in the name of the Nam Knights of America Motorcycle Club.

each year with new clothes and materials.

Those involved with the program would like to thank the multitude of generous

supporters who for years have made Christmas mornings special for the foster children of Towns and Union.

Local couple praying for Angel to deliver a Christmas Miracle

By Charles Duncan
Towns County Herald
Editor

MiLan Kim is distraught after having lived the last eight years on dialysis.

The process, referred to as renal replacement therapy, removes excess water, solutes and toxins from the blood of people whose kidneys have lost the ability to perform those vital functions.

Which is why MiLan, 57, of Blairsville, hopes that her dream of a Christmas Miracle comes true.

That dream consists of finding a living donor who matches her criteria for a kidney donor.

MiLan wants to live a normal life. She wants to be able to work, travel, and not be a burden on her family. A native of South Korea, she has lived in Union County since October 2011. She moved here with her husband, Tom Thompson, to be closer to the Union County Dialysis Center.

Initially, doctors believed she would get a kidney quickly. Those beliefs didn't come to fruition.

One year of waiting turned into five, and now, they tell her she will likely have to wait more than 10 years to find a donor.

"The first time we went for reevaluation at Piedmont Hospital, the doctor said, 'Oh, you're right there, it's going to be quick (receiving a donated kidney).' The doctors believed she was right at the top of the list four years ago," Thompson said. "What's happening is, the pool that is looking for a donor has expanded exponentially."

MiLan has been a frequent visitor of the Union County Dialysis Center since 2009, when she was diagnosed



Tom Thompson and MiLan Kim. Photo/Charles Duncan

with kidney disease.

She goes through the process of dialysis for four hours each treatment, three times a week. January will mark the beginning of MiLan's ninth year on dialysis. She's on the National Kidney Registry, listed as being in need of a donated kidney.

The problem with finding a match for MiLan, her blood type is B+, a rare type that makes finding a match almost impossible.

She prays for a new kidney, mostly because she doesn't want dialysis to rule her life anymore. It's Christmas, and MiLan is in search of a Christmas Miracle. She's praying for an Angel to deliver a living kidney donor.

Though her blood type is a difficult match, a person with blood type O, the universal blood type, could be a match. That is as long as they are healthy.

Her husband, Tom, wanted to donate a kidney to MiLan, however, his high blood pressure ruled him out

as a donor because of the risks involved.

"There are 100,000 people waiting for a kidney transplant," Thompson said. "Only 7,000 people are getting donated kidneys each year."

Approximately 1 in 3 kidney donations in the U.S., Great Britain and Israel are now from a live donor. Potential donors are carefully evaluated on medical and psychological grounds.

This ensures that the donor is fit for surgery and has no disease, which brings undue risk or likelihood of a poor outcome for either the donor or recipient.

The psychological assessment is to ensure the donor gives informed consent and is not coerced. In countries where paying for organs is illegal, authorities may also seek to ensure that a donation has not resulted from a financial transaction.

MiLan knows that studies show that people with kidney transplants live longer than those who remain on di-

alysis.

Her prayer is that someone will read this story and know someone who would be interested in becoming a suitable donor for her. Finding out if you're a suitable donor is easy.

It's a no-pressure call to Leanne, a registered nurse at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta.

For those interested in being considered for the donor program, call (404) 605-4605.

In talking with MiLan, she's confident that there is a match out there somewhere. She's confident that God will make sure that she gets a new kidney.

She lies in bed at night hoping and dreaming of a day when she's not subjected to dialysis any longer.

"I hope that someone has a kidney for me," MiLan said. "I hope for a Christmas Miracle."

Almost a decade has gone by since she became a dialysis regular. She keeps the faith that a Christmas Miracle is still within reach. She prays that her quest for a donor kidney comes to complete fruition.

Until that day comes, she keeps the faith.

New Year's Traditions

In many countries, New Year's celebrations begin on the evening of December 31 — New Year's Eve — and continue into the early hours of January 1. Revelers often enjoy meals and snacks thought to bestow good luck for the coming year.

In Spain and several other Spanish-speaking countries, people bolt down a dozen

grapes—symbolizing their hopes for the months ahead—right before midnight. In many parts of the world, traditional New Year's dishes feature legumes, which are thought to resemble coins and herald future financial success; examples include lentils in Italy and black-eyed peas in the southern United States. Because pigs repre-

sent progress and prosperity in some cultures, pork appears on the New Year's Eve table in Cuba, Austria, Hungary, Portugal and other countries. Ring-shaped cakes and pastries, a sign that the year has come full circle, round out the feast in the Netherlands, Mexico, Greece and elsewhere. In Sweden and Norway, meanwhile, rice pudding with an almond hidden inside is served on New Year's Eve; it is said that whoever finds the nut can expect 12 months of good fortune.

Other customs that are common worldwide include watching fireworks and singing songs to welcome the new year, including the ever-popular "Auld Lang Syne" in many English-speaking countries. The practice of making resolutions for the new year is thought to have first caught on among the ancient Babylonians, who made promises in order to earn the favor of the gods and start the year off on the right foot. (They would reportedly vow to pay off debts and return borrowed farm equipment.)

In the United States, the most iconic New Year's tradition is the dropping of a giant ball in New York City's Times Square at the stroke of midnight. Millions of people around the world watch the event, which has taken place almost every year since 1907. Over time, the ball itself has ballooned from a 700-pound iron-and-wood orb to a brightly patterned sphere 12 feet in diameter and weighing in at nearly 12,000 pounds.

Various towns and cities across America have developed their own versions of the Times Square ritual, organizing public drops of items ranging from pickles to possums at midnight on New Year's Eve.

Annual Possum Christmas Party



And Santa, I would like treats... and boxes to hide in...and CATNIP!



Take my picture next! Here, this is my best side!

The second annual Possum Christmas Party was held this year on December 22. It was a well-attended event with at least one feline guest present (of the domestic variety). All of the treats provided were well received by the crowd but the favorite by far was the Double-Stuf Oreos. The honored guests did allow some photos to be taken, but the possums were particularly camera shy whereas the raccoons seemed to actually line up to have their pictures taken. The event was an even bigger success this year than last and plans are already in the works for next year's party! TDS:27.FJ/SH