

# Town pitches in with home renovations for family’s young ones

ONAGA (AP) — “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition,” move over. When a family in Onaga needs help, neighbors don’t wait for a reality TV show to come to the rescue. Instead, they roll up their sleeves and start figuring out a way to make things better.

Scott and Sherri Brunkow recently became the focus of this northeast Kansas community’s generosity after learning their sons — 6-year-old Dylan and 5-year-old Dawson — have Duchenne muscular dystrophy, one of the most common and most severe forms of the disease.

Neighbors immediately rallied when they heard the family might have to move from their two-story limestone house because the boys soon wouldn’t be able to climb the steep stairs to their bedrooms or use the bathrooms, which weren’t handicapped-accessible.

The neighbors didn’t want the Brunkows — which also includes 9-year-old Cheyenne and 17-year-old Kirsti — to move from the community, so they decided to build an addition onto the stone house, which will allow the family to remain in their longtime home.

“Until you’re in a situation like this, you don’t know how grateful you are for friends and families,” Scott Brunkow said.

Sherri Brunkow said she is no stranger to muscular dystrophy. Her brother, David, who died eight years ago at age 28, had the disease. But Sherri had been told she wasn’t a carrier of the genetic disorder.

“About a year ago, Dylan started reminding me of David,” she said, adding that an examination by a doctor found nothing to be concerned about. “In October, his teacher said he was falling (more often). On Nov. 6, he was diagnosed. We found out (the gene) was a mutation, and it can be passed along.”

The couple decided to have Dawson tested for the disease. On Feb. 21, he also was diagnosed with

Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

“Life expectancy is 20,” Sherri said, adding that only males get Duchenne while females carry the disease to their offspring. “This has all been so overwhelming.”

When neighbor Grace Springer heard about the boys’ illnesses and the possibility of the family having to move from their home, she talked to fellow neighbor Claudia Janousek about the idea of getting the “Extreme Makeover” crew to do a renovation.

The Brunkows’ limestone house was built in the 1850s or 1860s and has 18-inch-thick rock walls. The house sat empty for five years before Scott bought it in 1989. Since then, he and his wife have spent hundreds of hours refurbishing the home.

While Springer and Janousek were exploring the “Extreme Makeover” notion, Bob Venneberg, Roy Duer and other Onaga residents began tossing around the idea of building the addition themselves.

“We’re not going to wait for nobody,” Victor Janousek, Claudia’s husband, said. “That’s the attitude the group has right now. We’re just going to do it.”

The men started planning a 24-by-30-foot addition to the south end of the home, with two bedrooms, an accessible bathroom and a wheelchair-accessible garage. Cost is estimated to be between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

At the top of their list is fundraising and obtaining dona-

tions of materials and labor.

A benefit roast beef dinner was scheduled for March 25 at the Onaga Community Center and donations are being accepted.

The project also has been designated as the chief recipient of money raised by the annual Danny Wells Poker Run, Venneberg said. Historically, the poker run has raised about \$6,000. Local churches also are pitching in with fundraising events.

Duer said local residents have

stepped forward to donate lumber, flooring and other materials, as well as labor to install plumbing, electrical wiring, cabinetry and heating and air conditioning.

Duer, Venneberg and the Brunkows’ neighbors said helping the young family out is repayment for all the couple has done for the Onaga community.

Duer said work on the addition is expected to begin in early May and be completed by the fall.

## Girls learn healthy foods

LAWRENCEVILLE, N.J. (AP) — For a group of urban teen girls, lessons in nutrition began in the produce section and ended in dairy at a suburban supermarket a few miles from their school. But the give-and-take was the most energetic in the meat section.

Stay away from the bacon, salami and the frying pan, a university student dietitian advised the teens. Broil or grill lean protein like fish instead. Trim the fat off red meat and the skin off chicken.

“The skin makes the chicken taste good,” protested 15-year-old Andrea Hagins. But she acknowledged that “if it’s better to help my health, I should try it out.”

The young women are students in Teem Esteem, a 3-year-old program that aims to teach good nutrition and offers options to the standard physical education classes at Trenton Central High School. The girls are guided through a supermarket and taught how to buy more nutritious foods.

Their fitness classes offer enticing options, including circuit training, cardio dance and karate complete with a trainer who trains them on the use of exercise balls and free weights.

They also get instruction on cooking and hear lectures on topics such as body image, date rape and bulimia, said their teacher Constance Kelley.

About half the students at the school come from low-income households, a group that is at risk for obesity and its related diseases, said Bonnie Arkus, director of the New Jersey-based Women’s Heart Foundation, which is collaborating with the school.

If teens can establish healthy eating habits now, they can reduce their risk for chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, said Gerri McKay, associate professor of nutrition at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

“Our goal is to empower the young women to clearly use the (nutrition) label to make the choices,” said McKay, whose students led the teens around the store. “What they’re doing today as adolescents is going to directly affect their health as adults.”

After a presentation about produce, Kyran Williams, 15, confessed she doesn’t eat many fruits and vegetables at home.

“In my household, we really aren’t that healthy-eating people,” she said. “I learned a lot that I didn’t know.”

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