

Couple fighting twin disorder

By JESSICA KASTNER
STAFF WRITER

When Lisa Cote found out she was pregnant with twins on May 11, 2002, she and her husband Jeffrey Willsons' hearts soared. After suffering two miscarriages they had been praying for a child, and their answer was two-fold.

But just two months later on July 20 the Southington couple learned their unborn babies had a disorder called Twin to Twin Fusion Syndrome, a placental abnormality associated with identical twins.

The next couple of months were like blur of nervousness and confusion for Cote and Willson. She underwent surgery in Wisconsin to remedy the problem by separating the twins' blood vessels but doctors were forced to stop the procedure when Cote came close to passing away on the operating table. She returned home weak, worried, but hoping for the best.

At just 19 weeks pregnant, Cote's pregnancy struggles were over, but a whole new series of heartaches began. After being born on September 10, one of the twins, Joshua passed away after nine hours. Little Ben remained alive, fighting for five weeks before the family faced the decision to let him go on October 15. During that time Ben underwent intestinal surgery at three weeks old, suffered seizures and was diagnosed as blind.

"It's one thing to love someone...it's an entirely different thing to love someone enough to truly let them go," Cote said. "And Jeffrey and I were called to do that - not

Here's the deal

Concert to raise funds to fight Fusion Twin Syndrome, Saturday, Sept. 16, YMCA Camp Sloper. Tickets \$10, can be purchased at www.twinangelfoundation.org, or \$15 at the door.

once, but twice - but they both gave us that gift of loving completely."

It's been four years since Lisa Cote and Jeffrey Willson said goodbye to their twin baby boys. Although the pain is never forgotten, a peaceful sounding Cote said she's learned a lot and even gained a positive outlook through the short but valued lives of her baby sons.

They cherish Lisa's older son Adam and daughter Tori, from her first marriage, even more and better realize the depth of support they have from the community.

"I experienced a love that I've never experienced before. A love that extends past my friendship and family circle, to those whom I've never even met and to places I've never visited," Cote said. "These boys have made me look at my son Adam and my daughter with new appreciation and love. They have shown me how much love my husband Jeffrey has for me in his hearted and to what length he will go to show me that love."

And her experience with TTFS has also inspired and motivated

her.

On September 16, at YMCA Camp Sloper, Cote and a slew of volunteers will put on a fund-raiser for the Twin Angel Foundation, which helps families dealing with Twin to Twin Transfusion Syndrome. It's a cause close to Cote's heart. The foundation paid for about 80 percent of the couples' expenses when traveling receive surgery.

The Family Folk Festival will raise money and awareness of the disease while entertaining crowds with performances by folk musicians and offering crafts sold by local vendors, kids' events, face painting barbeque and more. It will take place from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine.

A seasoned folk singer herself, Cote will perform at the event as well as the local band Number Nine. She and members of Number Nine are currently part of the First Congregational Church choir.

"I'm overwhelmed but very excited, it's going to be amazing," said Cote. "Most of all I just want raise awareness about TTFS because it's actually more common than people might think, and so few people know about it."

Tickets include the cost of food and can be purchased at a discounted price (\$10) online by visiting www.twinangelfoundation.org. Tickets will be available for \$15 at the door. Children under five years old will be admitted for free.

The entire Sloper facility will be open to visitors, with concerts taking place in the outdoor amphitheater facing the lake.

Council approves pool funds

By JESSICA KASTNER
STAFF WRITER

After learning last month the Memorial Park Pool would be closed for the rest of the summer, the town council used its Monday meeting to approve a \$195,000 appropriation needed to fix the pool by next year.

Issues surrounding the pool arose last fall when the town found cracks in the pool walls and decided to include the estimated \$157,000 repair costs within the 2006-07 budget to save money. When it came time for the repairs, however, not enough money was allocated to begin the work.

In the hopes that the pool would be opened for the last week in August, the council green-lighted that amount in July, but then more cracks and necessary repairs were found, which drove renovation costs to \$197,000.

Residents and councilors alike have voiced frustration over the lack of planning on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Commission and Parks Department, which Councilor Dolores Longo called inexcusable.

Scott Pools of Woodbury built Memorial Park pool in 1968.

Councilors aimed questions at Parks Director Richard Egidio and Scott Pools owner Jim Scott, who explained it was still cheaper renovate the pool as new instead of building a new pool for \$1 million.

The piping is the main cause

of the pool woes, said Scott, which occurred after water crept behind the walls through the skimmer areas during the winter, freezing and expanding the pipes.

The renovations call for a new piping system and new walls, a new pool bottom, and skimmers while keeping the walls and floor in tact, said Scott.

Councilor William DellaVecchia questioned whether the pool should remain 10-feet deep in one area, or be reduced to five feet in order to save money and maximize use of the pool. That way, diving would not be allowed and the town's liability would be decreased.

The newer community pool at Recreation Park only has a five-foot depth and does not allow diving, while divers still jump from the pool wall into the water at Memorial.

But Egidio said the high school students and lots of other community members enjoy being able to dive at the pool.

"Between the two, it's well-balanced," Egidio said.

Scott said he could scale the pool back to a five-foot depth for an initial cost, which would bring about 1,500 additional feet of shallow water.

But the council voted 6-2 to move the current plan to renovate the pool under its current design, with DellaVecchia and Dolores Longo voting against the appropriation.

"I think the way this was handled is shameful," Longo said.

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