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Edward donates gear to help disabled children

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Children with disabilities will benefit from about \$25,000 worth of weights, medicine balls, human lifts and other rehabilitation equipment donated by Edward Hospital and unloaded from long-term storage Tuesday.

The hospital donated the equipment to the Evanosky Foundation, a Naperville-based nonprofit dedicated to funding research for a cure for degenerative diseases affecting children, called pediatric leukodystrophies.

Bob and Sonya Evanosky run the foundation in honor of their three sons - twins John and Christopher, 4, and Jack, 2 - who were diagnosed with metachromatic leukodystrophy, or MLD, in early 2005. Children diagnosed with the disease are expected to live no more than six years.

Bob Evanosky said the equipment will go to the CoACH Care Center, a Naperville facility for children with special medical needs, and the Marianjoy Rehabilitation Center in Wheaton.

"It's really a blessing," he said. "From our standpoint at the foundation, one of the things in our mission statement is we find it important to help families who have children with disabilities. This equipment will help in that goal."

Edward had stored equipment from three of its now-closed clinics with the intention of opening a new clinic, said Julian Callachor, supervisor of Edward Hospital Rehabilitation Services. Five years later, that clinic had not opened, and the equipment was gathering dust.

"I'd rather see it be used constructively by someone who could use it than have it stuck in big crates in storage," he said. "A lot of this stuff was probably going to be thrown away."

Callachor said the staff knew the Evanosky children because they had been physical therapy patients since before they were diagnosed with MLD. Doctors originally thought John and Christopher had cerebral palsy, but then the boys began losing their speaking and walking abilities as toddlers.

The Evanoskys do not benefit from donations to the foundation. Their basement is already loaded like a rehab center, with a whirlpool, lift equipment, special bean bag seats, and room to stretch and massage.

The twins now get around in wheelchairs.

"Basically, our bodies serve as their bodies," Bob Evanosky said.

Jack was diagnosed early enough to undergo a stem-cell transplant in April 2005, and his disease has not progressed. His parents expect him to fully recover.

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