

Parents of ailing Saugus boy start Jared's Fund for research

By JAGLYN FITZGERALD

While many parents with a sick child spend most of their time and energy caring for their little one's daily needs, one Saugus couple is going above and beyond to try to save their son's life.

Last month, Ricky Connor, an Everett police officer, and his wife Reia, a former Patriots cheerleader, learned from doctors at Children's Hospital that their 2-year-old son, Jared, has a rare enzyme deficiency known as mucopolysaccharide disease (MPS) or Sanfilippo disease.

The disease leaves Jared's body unable to break down complex sugars. The build-up slowly destroys the circulatory system, bones, joints and vital organs, causing children to regress in various ways.

"We hope that these things don't happen to Jared," said Ricky Connor. "It's kind of a waiting game."

There is no known cure for the genetic disease, but the couple hopes they can raise awareness through Jared's Fund.

"The purpose of Jared's Fund is to raise money because what they've told us is the researchers are paid mostly by families," said Connor. "We are seeking out the best possible researchers to give this money to in a grant form."

Jared's case began when he



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CARE GIVERS: Jared Connor, 2, is held close by his mom, Reia, and dad, Ricky, who are raising money to help fight Sanfilippo disease.

had difficulty learning to walk and talk. It is unclear whether or not he will ever be able to speak, and most children with the disease are not expected to live more than 10 or 15 years.

"You can deal with a child that has problems, but when you hear that they're not going to live past a certain age that really just crushes you," said Connor.

The first event held in Jared's name will be a silent auction at The Place in Boston Sunday, as well as a Texas Hold 'em tournament at Boston Harley Davidson in Everett on April 28.

Donations can be submitted to Jared's Fund, Everett Cooperative Bank, 419 Broadway, Everett, MA 02149.