

A Little Girl's Giving Heart Ignites a Storm of Donations for Retts Syndrome and Creates a \$40,000 Market Hog

Story & Photos by Deena Fitzpatrick

Traditionally county fairs fall on what seems to be the hottest week of the year, the Deschutes County Buyers Barbecue and Livestock auction showed no mercy to the rule. Countless hours of volunteer work are accumulated to make certain that the year benefits its youth to the best of its ability. This means racing between barns and animals, dressed up for showing, dressed down for barn duty and feeding. The week ends without fail with the contributions of the sought after support of local business for the Livestock Auction and keeps the future of agriculture moving forward. The auction starts with a beautiful barbecue meal for the buyers, organized annually by Donna Johnson and her family. The contributing youth serve and help the table making certain that drinks are refilled and plates are cleared, it is the last few minutes of reflection for some before the bidding begins.

Some would almost describe this time of year as "Busier than Christmas." Making sure that both animals and youth are presentable and to each show ring on time, with each participant demonstrating their personal best



COUSINS Ava Garus and Marlowe, left, are shown spending time together. Marlowe has Rett's syndrome, a neurological disorder that effects One in 10,000 girls.

after working hard all year. This particular August 5th auction in Deschutes County was no exception as all the hustle was made still with the acts of humanity and kindness that rang through on auction night.

One little girl's selfless contribution caught the hearts of many.

Ava Garus walked into the auction ring with an intention, need, and purpose. Her Father Toby handed her letter to the auctioneer seconds before she was about to sell her red ribbon pig. In an atmosphere that is yelling and arm raising to make sure certain purchases are made, a moment of stillness like snowfall overtook the ring as the community listened and responded in abundance. As she walked around, managing a smile as tears streamed down her cheeks as the announcement began over the speakers, every cent of Ava's auction money would be sent to her cousin, Marlowe, who has Rett Syndrome. The money is needed for research that is projected to have a cure in three years. Rett syndrome, a neurological disorder found in 1 in 10,000 girls, slowing the process of development beginning at six months old, many times disguised as autism or cerebral palsy. Marlowe's symptoms began at eight months with an official diagnosis at three years old.

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SQUEAL, the \$40,000 red ribbon market hog and Ava Garus at the 2017 Deschutes County Fair in Redmond, Oregon.

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While discussion was coming up of what Ava would do with the money from her market pig, Ava wanted to give the money to Marlowe. With that said Ava went around town to potential buyers reading her auction letter to the community explaining her plan to contribute to More4Marlowe. Originally, the proposed-hoped-for amount would be \$1,000.00 for the cause, after she earned back money to cover her expenses from her project. Marlowe's parents tried to raise money in the past and after weeks of extensive fundraising accumulated a total of \$10,000.

As soon as the bidding started it was a race to top off how far local businesses would go to support Ava's cause. Auction spotters could not raise their arms fast enough or yell loud enough as the price per pound climbed to \$150.00 in under less than two minutes. Resulting in an army of 22 Deschutes County's business elite grouped together to finish the final bid only to have one more contributor round up the donation to conclude a total of Ava's sale price to \$40,000 with the price per pound equaling \$157.00 per pound.

As the business gathered in the auction ring for a photograph of the amazing group and the cause that brought them together, tears now flooding from eyes of Toby and April Garus along with many others for the standing ovation for the buyers, and the little girl that spoke for a cousin who is unable to speak for herself. This community leaped at the opportunity to contribute to a cause they had never heard of, this fact did not stop them from giving for Ava's beloved cousin, Marlowe. The \$40,000 will potentially make the research process quicker. Together, history was made in Deschutes County and what appears to ever be paid for a red ribbon market hog at a county fair.

The giving spirit of the community, and the contribution forward began an avalanche of kindness. Ava and her family will be taking the 2018 year off of 4-H to travel but when she and her family return a gift of a new market pig will be given to Ava by Brooklynn Goetzinger, another first year 4-H'er carrying on her own swine breeding program. When she heard all the commotion in the auction ring and about Ava giving her

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4-H SHOWMATES Ava Garus, right, and Brooklynn Goetzinger are pictured at the 2017 Deschutes County Fair. Brooklynn was inspired to give after seeing Ava's gift to her young cousin. Brooklynn is giving Ava a market hog for the 2019 Deschutes County Fair out of her own breeding project.

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money to her cousin she decided instantly, like the older generation that supports these youth, to give her a pig from her own breeding project. “Since Ava won’t have her auction money, she can have one of my piglets.”

The news spread amongst the county’s and one judge mentioning the amazing act during the Polk County Fair where more cousins, Annie and Noah Garus, were proudly giving their auction amounts for Marlowe’s cause. The record-breaking sale did not stop in Deschutes County for one particular buyer, Wild Ride Brewing Company, followed the cause to Polk County purchasing Annie’s market hog on August 12th for \$41.00 a pound and her brother Noah Garus hog was purchased by his Uncle Dusty Garus for \$6.50 a pound all benefiting Marlowe.

When asking Ava what made her decide to do this her response was simple

“That is just what you do. You help people.” Prior to the auction Ava and her Mother April, knowing that this auction would be important to raising money for Marlowe, said a prayer with Squeal (the pig) before the auction; to gather their emotions and focus on what the auction was for, raising any money they could for Marlowe!



NOAH GARUS, left, sold his 4-H market hog at Polk County Fair in Rickreall, Oregon for \$6.50/lb. to his uncle Dusty Garus. Annie Garus sold her 4-H market hog for \$41.00 a pound to Chad Hinton of Wild Ride Brewery in Redmond. All The money was donated to More4Marlowe and research of Rett’s Syndrome.



CHAD HINTON of Wild Ride Brewing, right, who not only was a buyer in Ava’s pig ... he bought her cousin Annie Garus’s market hog at Polk County Fair in Rickreall, Oregon for \$41.00 a pound.



RINGMAN John Ramsey is “enthusiastically” spotting bids during auction action at 2017 Deschutes County Fair in Redmond, Oregon.

A special note from the family:

The entire Garus/Ramirez family is overjoyed with the support of the business and community members involved in raising money and spreading the work about Rett’s Syndrome. “Please help us support these wonderful individuals and companies that do so much to help not only our family’s 4-H projects, but many of them generously purchased multiple animals to help kids all day long at the 4-H/FFA Auctions”

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BUYERS AND AUCTIONEERS giving a round of ovation and tears for Ava Garus and her \$40,000 red ribbon market hog, Squeal, at the Deschutes County Fair in Redmond. Ava and her 4-H Market Hog showing cousins, Noah and Annie donated the proceeds from the sale of their animals to More4Malowe to help fund research of Rett's Syndrome.

Ava and her pig plus these Buyers

Robertson and Associates Insurance-
 Ryan & Melinda Robertson
 Kruse Properties- Randy Kruse
 Paragon Sitework Construction- Dusty & Suzanne Garus
 Dunlap Fine Homes – Bruce Dunlap
 Keeco Crane and Rigging Service – Ryan Evans
 Rock Tree Valley Ranch- Dan Hebrand
 Bobcat of Central Oregon – Barry & Tammy Penington
 Tewalt & Sons Inc - Daryl Tewalt
 Dr. Darren Kowalski
 Del Barber Excavating
 Wild Ride Brewing - Chad Hinton
 High Desert Aggregate - Mike Moore
 Abbas Well Drilling – Jeb & Gus Abbas
 Treasure Valley Coffee Co. – Javan Shull
 JR Faulkner Excavating- JR & Mandy Faulkner

Terry Fidler Excavation – The Fidler Family
 Abbas Pump Service – Jeb & Gus Abbas
 Cascade Management Group LLC
 – Nate Ramirez
 Central Oregon Heating and Cooling
 – Don Todd
 Cinder Butte Meat Co.- Bob & Lori Mehan
 Patrick Environmental Inc. – Jeremy Dice
 Tri County Paving- Jeff & Dawn Curl

=\$40,000
and growing!