

Community rallies together for Amaranth family



Written By **Sam Odrowski**

The community has rallied together, raising over \$4,000 through GoFundMe for a local family facing extraordinary medical challenges.

Larissa Jago of Amaranth and her three-year-old son, Hayden have been at Sick Kids for the past six months, where he's spent most of his life, undergoing 14 surgeries and is currently receiving hemodialysis six days a week as he has no kidneys. Hayden also gets seizures due to a stroke he suffered at one month old.

?'[Larissa's] full-time job is taking care of Hayden and it's incredibly tough when they're spending most of his life in Toronto at the hospital, away from home,?' said Danielle Bignell, Larissa's sister.

?'The amount of surgeries Hayden's had to go through ? a lot of them we were incredibly scared for, each surgery holds a risk and sure enough, every time he comes back just fighting and when there's a new problem introduced ? it's heartbreaking.?'

Bignell was ready to give her kidney earlier in the month and was put under general anaesthesia for a laparoscopic surgery at Toronto General Hospital. While the surgeons were moving Bignell's organs around to access her kidney, moments away from removing it, they received a call from Sick Kids telling the surgeons to cancel the operation immediately.

While Hayden was put under as well, ready to receive his aunt's kidney, information that one of his nurses was a close contact of

COVID-19 came forward, forcing the surgery's cancellation.

?It was a hard call for all the doctors and surgeons and Sick Kids because no one has ever had something like this happened before. No one ever thought in a million years that they would get the phone call right before they were about to cut into my child and say 'please stop what you're doing, there has been a significant exposure,' said Larissa.

Bignell was heartbroken once she heard the news, after fully regaining consciousness and understanding what took place.

?When I was coming off the anesthetic, of course, I totally forgot where I was and once I remembered, I was actually pretty excited thinking, 'wow, he finally has a kidney', then a surgeon came over and lets me know I still have both,' she recalled.

?Once I rationalized afterwards knowing the consequences of let's say, him [Hayden] testing positive, it made a lot of sense, but it was it was still disappointing.?

Having spent weeks away from work in quarantine before the surgery, she now faces weeks in recovery, but plans to do it all again when it's safe to do so, about a month from now.

?My sister's a champ, she's the bomb, I love her,' said Larissa

She told the Free Press that in addition to the kidney surgery being cancelled, COVID-19 has made things more challenging for her family in a lot of ways.

There can only be one parent allowed at Sick Kids with Hayden at one time and because Larissa is living at Ronald McDonald House, no visitors are allowed there as well. She also can't leave for more than 24 hours, so a quick trip home to see her husband, Jacob Jago, is very difficult.

Fortunately, she's made friends with some of the other moms at Sick Kids who have also have children on hemodialysis, and says the hospital staff are very supportive and understanding as well.

?I'm just so eternally grateful for them taking care of my child as much as they know how. I just love them all? a lot of the doctors and nurses here are like a second family,' said Larissa.

Meanwhile, the Jago family has been blown away by the community's support, and Larissa said she was completely shocked when finding out about the GoFundMe page and all the donations that have come in.

Deja Vu Diner has even began donating 5 per cent of their meal boxes to the Jago family.

?I just like want to extend a huge thank you to the community I don't even have the words to properly thank each and every one of them,' said Larissa.

Bignell added, 'It is absolutely incredible how much the community really comes together, caring for some people that they haven't even met. It's amazing.?

Going forward, its Larissa's hope that Hayden and her can be home in Amaranth for Christmas this year, if all goes well with the kidney transplant.

To learn more about the GoFundMe page for Hayden, visit: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/helping-hayden-and-his-family>