

Hoping to help charities, one dollar at a time

By GEORGE AUSTIN
Editor

SOMERSET — When thinking about how their new website that has been set up to help charities could be successful, Erik and Dawn Klaver talk about that old shampoo commercial. In the commercial two friends talk about the shampoo to two friends who tell two friends and so on until there are a lot of people involved. The Klavers are not looking for single large donations, but for many small contributions from people that will add up.

"It's about a lot of people doing good together," Ms. Klaver said.

The website, called charityamonth.com, is up and running. The name of the non-profit organization is called One Charity A Month Foundation. Mr. Klaver has told friends and family members about the website and is hoping the word will spread. In about a week, just from sending e-mails to family and friends, \$300 has already been donated to help patients with multiple sclerosis. Mr. Klaver said one of his friends forwarded the e-mail to 40 or 50 people.

"That's really the goal of this, not to have one person donate \$100, but have 100 people donate one dollar," Mr. Klaver said.

Mr. Klaver, a graphic designer, came up with the idea to start the website a couple of months ago. On the website, Mr. Klaver says why he started the website and where the money will go.

"Really, I tried to make it as self explanatory as I could," Mr. Klaver said.

The money will be donated to a charity that is chosen each month. There will also be a link to that charity's website.



NEW WEBSITE: Donations for various charities will be accepted on this website that was created by Somerset resident Erik Klaver.

"The most important thing is not the amount of money that is donated," Mr. Klaver said. "It's that more people know about it."

Mr. Klaver already has several ideas for where to donate the money since his wife has multiple sclerosis, he has Crohn's disease and another relative has battled prostate cancer. He said people have already been recommending possible charities for future months to help battle lupus and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS).

"There are a lot of people I think are going to be suggesting charities, based on their history, whether it be breast cancer awareness or whatever," Mr. Klaver said.

The charity that has been chosen for March is the National Multiple Sclerosis Society because of the disease that Ms. Klaver has had for five years. The society funds research for the

disease and medications that patients need to fight off effects of multiple sclerosis. Ms. Klaver said her husband also volunteers to do publicity for another foundation that helps provide money for everyday expenses for people who have multiple sclerosis.

Ms. Klaver said it took four years to diagnose her multiple sclerosis. She said a lot of women get MS in their early 30s. She said it started out as the everyday cold. She said her mouth went numb after two days and then she lost feeling in the right side of her body. She said tests were done on her nerves. Doctors did not figure out she had MS until she lost vision in her right eye.

"It's not easy to diagnose because it has the same symptoms as Lyme disease and other things," Ms. Klaver said.

There are different severities of MS. Ms. Klaver, who is a computer programmer, has a mild case of the disease.



SPECTATOR PHOTOS BY GEORGE AUSTIN
FOR GOOD CAUSES: Somerset resident Erik Klaver has created a website that will be used to collect donations for a different charity each month. He is seen above with his family. From left to right are Matthew Klaver, Mr. Klaver, Dawn Klaver and Jacob Klaver.

"I've been pretty lucky," Ms. Klaver said. "I have nothing that's been debilitating. I've been able to work, drive."

Mr. Klaver said he wanted to help raise money for services to help multiple sclerosis patients and for research, not just for his wife, but for other people who have the disease. He said people ask for others to donate money online for things like automobile repairs and for new shoes.

"I really felt if we could do something constructive, where if the money could go to charity or something worthwhile, it would

make more sense," Mr. Klaver said.

Mr. Klaver said accepting donations online for the charities will be easier to track and will give donors automatic receipts. Donors can set up an account so that money is donated to the website every month if they do not want to go online to do it every time. Mr. Klaver said he does not want donations mailed to his home. He will be maintaining the website monthly and sending the donation to the charity that has been chosen. He said he does not want it to be a

full-time job.

Mr. Klaver said almost 100 percent of the money that is donated will be given to the charities. PayPal charges a small fee for its online collecting service that will have to be paid.

Mr. Klaver said a lot of people would like to help charities, but can't always give large sums of money. With his website, he said small amounts of money can be donated and it only takes about three minutes to do.

"We want to help as many people as we can," Mr. Klaver said.