

# SOUTH POST

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

(3)

S1

## After seizures, 3-year-old has lots of new friends

*A five-hour episode in March damaged Sarah Jane Smith's brain, and grade-schoolers and complete strangers have pitched in to help.*

BY THERESA TIGHE  
*Of the Post-Dispatch*

Fifth-grader Leah Efken and her classmates are on a mission.

The students in Elaine McArthur's class at Harry S Truman Elementary in the Lindbergh School District are raising money to help Sarah Jane Smith, a 3-year-old whose brain was damaged by a

five-hour seizure in March.

Hoping that she can learn to walk and talk and attend school at Truman someday, the class is holding a garage and bake sale at the school on Saturday to help with her medical expenses.

Said Leah Efken: "She'll recover, but she might not be like herself again. That's sad. But we would feel worse if we couldn't help her."

Many others are helping, too. With a series of benefits and donations, they have raised about \$34,000 for the Smith family. The money goes into a trust fund for Sarah Jane's medical expenses. The family has insurance, but not all expenses are covered.

Her parents, Sandra and David Smith of Crestwood, said that so far

the donations had kept them out of serious debt.

The Smiths are co-owners, with Barry Lee and Kerry Brown, of SmithLee Productions in Maplewood. The company designs video and audio projects, Web sites, multimedia productions and television and radio spots.

Many who have given have never met the Smiths. They have only seen Sarah Jane's picture or heard or read about her.

Sarah Jane began having seizures when she was 5 months old. Between 5 months and 3 years of age, she had thousands of seizures. But until the five-hour seizure in March, none damaged her brain.

At the time, doctors at Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital gave

### How you can help

**What:** A garage and bake sale for the benefit of Sarah Jane Smith.

**When:** 7 a.m. to noon Saturday.

**Where:** Harry S Truman Elementary School, 12225 Eddie and Park Road, Sunset Hills.

Sarah Jane a 20 percent chance of surviving. After a 112-day hospital stay, Sarah Jane went home, unable to see, to speak or to move. She had a feeding tube. She couldn't smile. Doctors couldn't tell the Smiths what skills Sarah Jane might regain.

Sarah Jane has been receiving physical therapy, occupational ther-



Sarah Jane

apy and speech therapy. She is in therapy three or four hours a day.

She is also getting hyperbaric therapy, which means using oxygen, at the Midwest Hyperbaric Institute near Chicago. The institute's medical director, Dr. August Martignucci, said hyperbaric oxygen therapy helps the brain heal by

See Sarah Jane, Page 3