

Michalica family receives longtime Christmas wish

by Karen Burgess

The Michalica family of Fredericton celebrated its best Christmas in years over the holidays.

In 1984, Karel and Stanya Michalica learned that their son Mark, just about to graduate from UNB's Physical Education program, was gravely ill.

Since then, Mark's illness has brought him near death, baffling doctors across the continent, reducing the young man's athletic 6-foot-four frame to a weight of a mere 130 pounds.

Treatments and examinations by doctors and specialists in Canada and the U.S. brought a heavy financial burden to the family, whose expenses at one point totalled over \$250,000, but affected little change in Mark's condition until recently.

Last May, Mark underwent an operation at the Tri-City Health Centre in Dallas, Texas, which, in combination with ongoing treatment, has improved his health to the point where his parents have reason to hope he will be able to return to Fredericton as early as March.

"It is the first significant improvement in Mark in years," explained father Karel, a soil management specialist with Agriculture New Brunswick.

Michalica said the doctors at the Dallas clinic diagnosed Mark as having a multiple chemical sensitivity which caused his body to begin rejecting milk, meats, many common foods, and other environmental elements.

The clinic staff, most of whom have suffered in the past from environmental illnesses such as Mark's, did extensive tests on samples of Mark's blood to determine what chemical pollutants could have caused his illness.

The operation, to help reverse the effects of the condition on his digestive system, and a holistic exercise and nutrition-based treatment have helped to eliminate some of the toxins discovered in Mark's system from his blood stream.

The results of the operation were visible within days, says Michalica, who reported that Mark has regained a considerable amount of weight, recovering from a low of 110 pounds to reach 155 pounds.

After one and a half years of being fed intravenously, Mark is now eating a relatively normal, though restricted diet.

The operation was first suggested last year during Mark's first visit to the clinic, but on signs of an improvement in Mark's condition, in light of staggering medical expenses, and because Canadian doctors were unconvinced of the necessity of operating, it was decided that Mark should return home.

His condition again deteriorated, and the situation appeared desperate as the Michalicas faced a remaining bill of over \$150,000 US at the clinic which would have to

be settled before Mark could be re-admitted.

The Michalica's appealed to the New Brunswick Department of Health for assistance, and the Medicare system came to their aid.

Michalica said he never found out the exact details reached as a result of talks between Medicare officials and the clinic, but only that the debt was to be discharged and Mark readmitted.

Medicare currently covers costs incurred at the clinic which are incurred only through the application of conventional medical treatments.

Other treatments, such as acupuncture, and those which provide emotional or psychological support, are not covered by the government although they are deemed necessary by the clinic's staff.

The result is that Mark's family is again facing steep medical expenses which will have to be dealt with somehow.

Reigh Eldridge, an organizer of The Friends of Mark Trust Fund which was established four years ago to help defray the Michalicas medical expenses, estimates that the family owes approximately \$20,000 for Mark's treatments to date.

The steering committee of The Friends of Mark Trust Fund will meet soon to discuss the possibility of holding a special fund-raiser in the city, but in the meantime, anyone wishing to contribute can make donations at the Bank of Montreal on Prospect Street.

He hopes the residents and businesses of the community will respond with the same compassion for Mark which they have demonstrated in the past.

Frederictonians have contributed \$23,000 to the trust fund, an amount which has helped significantly in Mark's recovery so far.

Eldridge said the community's support has been greatly appreciated by Mark's family and friends, but commented, "We can't give up now because Mark has come a long way. We just have to keep going until he gets to the point where his family can sustain him."

When Mark returns to Fredericton a great deal of effort will have to go into keeping him on the road to better health.

Michalica said his son will only be able to eat organically grown food, and will have to obtain environmentally safe housing.

There is a possibility a house or apartment will have to be custom built for the young man using paints, adhesives and materials manufactured to reduce the amount of chemical fumes and pollutants to which he would be exposed.

"We're just learning about all this, and people are just becoming aware about the environment," Michalica explained.

"Moncton has some environmentally safe housing and we're learning how people are becoming sensitive to things, but all this is fairly new. Within the last 50 years we've increased the amount of materials, wrappings, coatings and additives, how can we say it's not harmful?"

The Michalicas have also bought air filters and other products for their own home in the hopes that Mark will at least be able to visit with his parents, and his sister, Kerri, a first-year UNB Arts and Science Student, at their family home.

"I feel Mark was unfortunate because he didn't have a good growing up. From age 20 he was sick," said Michalica.

"But if Mark can be brought out of this, with his experience, I'm sure he can be valuable to himself and to other people."

Caribbean Circle News

The Caribbean Circle has embarked on a programme which would see Caribbean newspapers made available in the Harriet Irving Library. Last year a subscription to the *Jamaican Gleaner* was started. This month, copies of a Toronto-based Caribbean publication, *Share*, will be available in the Harriet Irving Library. *Share* covers news and other cultural events in the Caribbean and North American region.

Since the local New Brunswick press, and electronic media have no coverage of events in the Caribbean region, students, faculty and the general community are invited to take full advantage of the two publications, *The Jamaican Gleaner* and *Share*, now available in the library. Other Caribbean regional journals available in the library are *Caribbean Quarterly* and *Latin American Perspectives*.

The Caribbean Circle hopes to make more newspapers available and welcomes suggestions as well as financial support for its drive to educate the St. Thomas and UNB community about the culturally, historically rich and ec-

lectic Caribbean region.

As far as the Caribbean Circle's programme for this semester, the following events are planned.

1) Caribbean Nite 1994 to take place on March 19th, featuring a dinner, cultural show and dance.

2) A ski trip to Crabbe Mountain on Saturday, February 12th. Departure time from the SUB is 10:00am. For registration please call Mark Ireland - Tel: 454-8284, Mark Chandra - Tel: 454-0561, Samantha Luck - Tel: 472-6503, or the SUB Help Centre. Fee \$28.00 for transportation, Ski Lessons, Ski Rental, and Lift.

3) The first general meeting for this semester - Sunday, January 16th, at 3:00pm Room 103 of the SUB. The meeting will be followed by the showing of a movie.

4) Several sporting events, movie nights, and the graduation banquet, to end the academic year. Best wishes for a Happy New Year and a successful second semester go out to all from the executive and membership of the Caribbean Circle.

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