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Community opens hearts and wallets at Stockwell auction

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The Chugiak-Eagle River community greeted Shawn Stockwell and his family with open hearts and wallets during the fourth annual Stockwell fundraising auction held at the Lions Club May 20.

Shawn Stockwell returned home in December after spending nearly four years in Palo Alto, Calif., awaiting heart transplant surgery. He received a new heart in July and recovered enough to return home in time for Christmas.



Diane Mucha, who was Shawn's kindergarten teacher at Alpenglow Elementary School, organized the auction and each of the three previous.

"I hope this is the last one we have to do for the Stockwells," she said. "Trista wrote on Shawn's Web site that it was the final stop on the tour, but the bills haven't stopped coming in and the family could use the support."

Trista Stockwell accepts a check for \$550 from Corey Pass, a guard at the Hiland Mountain Correction Center. The donation was made during the fourth Shawn Stockwell fund raising auction May 20 at the Eagle River Lions Club.

Star Photo By DARRELL L. BREESE

During the past four years the financial burden the Stockwells have faced has grown, but neither Trista nor her husband George had time to worry much about it, as they focused on Shawn's health.

"Shawn came first," George said. "I kept telling myself that we could worry about the bills later."

As much as he would have liked to ignore the growing debt, George admitted to being scared of the financial crunch while his family was in California awaiting Shawn's new heart.

"I kept working to pay the basic bills," he said. "But every time I had to fly down to be with them I wasn't working and wasn't getting paid. I was afraid that there wouldnt be a house for my family to come home to a couple of times, money got so tight."

George credited previous auctions for seeing them through the difficult times.

"The generosity of the community, through the auctions and other donations helped alleviate the worry and helped us keep our home," he said. "It really means a lot to

me as the father to see the community reach out to help us in our time of need. We owe everyone a big thank you."

The auction featured more than 25 items that were auctioned off by KASH Country's "Morning Moo" radio hosts Jeff and Jimmy. There was also 205 items available in the silent auction.

Additionally, contributions to the Stockwells from individual fund raising efforts were presented, totaling more than \$3,500.

Becca Boggs, an Eagle River High School sophomore organized a "Dollars for Shawn" fundraiser at the school, with the goal of collecting \$1 from each of the school's 850 students. Thanks to a large single donation, she was able to surpass her target.

Nicole Moore, a Chugiak High student, collected items to fill a gift basket for the Stockwells. She presented them the basket before Christmas, but at the auction she announced she had raised \$1,500 for the family as part of her senior project.

Corey Pass, a guard at the Hiland Mountain Correction Center, made a surprise presentation of \$550 from his co-workers.

When the gavel dropped on the final auction item a grand total of more than \$10,000 was raised for the Stockwells.

"He still has to fly back to the hospital every month and that adds up really quick," George said. "We've spent more than \$20,000 in travel expenses alone since Shawn has returned home and he still has several more trips he needs to make back to the hospital."

Mucha hinted that there might be at least one more auction in the future.

"Like any old rock and roll band, there is always the chance of getting things together again for one more show."

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