



MATT FRYE/Liberty Tribune

Sarah Oyen of Liberty is congratulated by her friend and bowling partner Sherrie Benson during their weekly bowling outing with Concerned Care on Oct. 10. Oyen recently raised \$2,700 for a Concerned Care fundraising bowl-a-thon.

Fundraising phenomenon

Sarah Oyen raises more than \$12,000 over the years for Concerned Care

By Natalie Shelton

Sarah Oyen's calendar is filled with bowling, dinner and movie nights, hiking, and out-of-town trips.

Oyen, 27, owes her active social life to Concerned Care, a nonprofit Clay County agency that serves people who are developmentally disabled, and Oyen makes sure every year she returns Concerned Care's favor.

Concerned Care's recreation department has held a bowling fundraiser at Retro Bowl in Liberty every September for the past nine years to raise money so it can continue providing social



Sarah Oyen bags groceries at Price Chopper in Liberty before heading to Liberty Bowl on Oct. 10. Regular customers at Price Chopper who have become friends with Oyen helped her raise \$2,700 for Concerned Care through their contributions.

and recreational opportunities for the people it serves.

And every year, Oyen has been its

top fundraiser — by a long shot.

OYEN: Sarah hopes to raise more next year

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Concerned Care's records go back to 2001, when she raised \$594. In 2002, she upped it to \$1,172.

Her personal records go back to 2003, when she raised \$1,386. Since then, she's raised her goal each year by a couple hundred dollars and exceeded it every time. In 2004, it was \$1,582, then \$1,947 and then \$2,281. During this year's bowl-a-thon, she raised \$2,763.

And next year's goal?

"\$3,000," she said with a big smile.

"Our second-place winner this year raised \$600, which is pretty high, and the third-place winner raised \$170," said Rob Beigel, a recreational programmer for Concerned Care. "They still have a ways to catch up with Sarah."

The method in which she raises the funds are as remarkable as the amount she raises.

With a computer her brother gave her two years ago, she keeps meticulous records in a Microsoft Excel file with donor names, addresses and amounts so she can give them a letter or brochure each year. She creates her brochures with Microsoft Publisher.

Her mother, Joyce Oyen, said her daughter canvassed their neighborhood, sometimes returning to one home as many as five or six times before catching the owner at home. She also asks her fellow employees at Price Chopper to contribute, and she mails her fundraising letter to her faithful customers.

"I tell everyone who gives to her, 'If you give to her once, you'll never get away from it,'" her mother said. "Part of the

HOW TO DONATE

If you would like to contribute to next year's bowl-a-thon, either by donating to Sarah Oyen or another Concerned Care client, call Concerned Care at **474-3026**.

personality of many kids with disabilities is that they're very tenacious."

A portion of Oyen's records show she had 179 donors in 2007, and their average contribution was \$15.44. Her mom said pledges ranged from \$1 to \$150.

"For someone who is mentally handicapped, Sarah's got one heck of a mind," said store director Lou DeMarco of Price Chopper, where Oyen has been a sacker for seven years.

DeMarco said Oyen knew all her customers by name, and several made sure they always went through her line.

Her mother agrees that Oyen has developed quite a following over the years.

"You can go anywhere — I don't care where you go — and somebody there knows Sarah," Joyce Oyen said. "Working at Price Chopper has been great for her. They hire kids with dis-

abilities, which I think is just fantastic."

DeMarco said Oyen was one of six Price Chopper employees who were developmentally disabled.

"They touch a lot of people's lives, including other employees and our customers," he said. "They help our employees have a different understanding of our world, and it's just neat to see how much all our employees care for each other because of them."

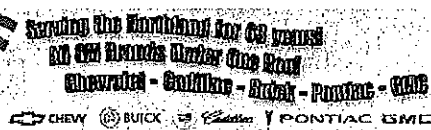
Joyce Oyen said her daughter's work for Concerned Care was important because "it raises the consciousness of the community."

"It makes people aware that there are others out there who benefit from Concerned Care who are raising money as well," she said. "They may know someone who's disabled but might not realize they're raising money like Sarah."

Joyce Oyen said her daughter was already preparing for next year's bowl-a-thon.

"This isn't like work for Sarah," her mother said. "It's a pleasure. It's a challenge."

Staff writer Natalie Shelton can be reached at 781-4941 or nshelton@npgco.com.



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Bowl-a-thon named in top fundraiser's honor

News - Community News

WRITTEN BY ANGIE ANAYA BORGEDALEN

THURSDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2009 00:00

When it comes to fundraising for a cause, Sarah Oyen has few peers.

So successful has Oyen been in raising money over the years for Concerned Care that an annual bowl-a-thon has been named in her honor.

This year for the first time the event will be called the "Sarah Oyen Classic." It will be held from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 18, at Retro Bowl, 906 W. Liberty Drive.

Oyen said she was happy that they named the 11th annual bowl-a-thon for her.



"I think it's an honor," Oyen said. "I raised the most money ever."

Last year she raised \$3,421, and this year her goal is \$3,500. By comparison, her closest competitor raised \$125.

The money raised goes to help fund recreational opportunities for the developmentally disabled such as bowling, movies, swimming, hiking, day trips and special events.

Her mother, Joyce Oyen, said her daughter was incredibly organized and had made many friends at her job as a sacker at the old Price Chopper grocery store.

"It may be a little harder for her this year because of the economy and people are not giving as much, and she's moved to the new Price Chopper," said Joyce Oyen, "but she really works hard and she's persistent."

Undaunted by any obstacles, Sarah Oyen said last week she was just \$1,000 short of her goal.

Cindy Sevier, a family friend, said she would not bet against Sarah Oyen meeting and even exceeding her goal.

"She's simply amazing," Sevier said. "I don't know how she does it, but she's incredible."

Sarah Oyen said her secret is to keep detailed lists of past donors and how much they had given.

"Then I pass out notes and I call them," Sarah Oyen said.

Since she now works as a sacker at the new Price Chopper, she said her friend and former co-worker, Sandra Brownsberger, at the old Price Chopper was helping her.

Saturday, October 17th, 2009

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
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
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Would you rather tailgate than watch a Chiefs game this year?

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"She also sacks groceries," Sarah Oyen said.

In addition to working at Price Chopper four days per week and working on her fundraising, 29-year-old Sarah Oyen manages to have quite a social life. Joyce Oyen said they trade rides with another family, taking the women to Sears Grand where they catch the Concerned Care van.

"She goes to something about four times a week," Joyce Oyen said. "I can't keep up with her."

Sarah Oyen said her favorite activity was bowling.

"I keep my own score and I have my own bowling ball and gloves," Sarah Oyen said. "I'm a pretty good bowler."

She also competes in the Special Olympics in bowling and field and track.

According to its Web site, Concerned Care's mission is to "maximize the capability of individuals with developmental disabilities to manage their own lives and minimize their dependence on others."

UNEMPLOYMENT HIGH FOR DISABLED

- In August 2009, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the unemployment rate of persons with a disability was 16.9 percent, compared with 9.3 percent for persons with no disability, not seasonally adjusted.

- The employment/population ratio for persons with a disability was 18.4 percent, compared with 64.6 percent for persons with no disability.

- People with disabilities in the labor force was 22.2 percent compared with 71.2 percent for persons with no disability.

For more information, visit www.bls.gov/cps/

[cpsd/sability.htm](#). October is also Disability Employment Awareness month.

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