

By ROBERT PIERCE

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In January 2013, Seward County Sheriff's Deputy Jeff Keating began to feel ill. He went to a local doctor and was later sent to a kidney specialist in Wichita.

Keating's kidneys had shut down. After tests and dialysis had been performed, he was brought back to Liberal.

"He began to have pains in his hips, so he went back to the doctor, and they did an MRI," said Rob Gant, who works with Keating at the Seward County Sheriff's office.

Doctors then found tumors in Keating's body, and he was diagnosed with Stage III bone cancer in November 2013.



Keating is now at home doing treatments, and family and friends are looking for help with paying medical costs.

As part of the assistance, a benefit dinner and silent auction has been put together.

“We’re having a silent auction as well as a live auction and a dinner,” said coordinator Misty Lucas, a longtime friend of Keating. “The dinner’s going to be brisket, sausage, baked beans and coleslaw and a variety of desserts.”

Tickets for the fundraiser are \$20. The date is set for 6 p.m. April 5. The doors will open at 5:30 p.m. at the Seward County Ag Building.

Lucas said some of the items being auctioned off include a signed guitar from country artist Jerrod Niemann, along with some jewelry and guns.

Gant said the fundraiser is a benefit that is not associated with the sheriff’s office.

“It is being organized by his friends to assist with medical bills and everyday living,” he said.

Both Gant and Lucas said Keating is not in 100 percent remission, but the news is looking better.

“If he goes two months without any setbacks, he will be eligible for a stem cell transplant,” Lucas said.

Lucas said she was unsure of exactly when Keating’s condition started.

“I know he was having kidney problems,” she said. “He got his kidney problems taken care of. Then he started having problems with the hip. They went in, and I don’t if they tested it or a doctor said, ‘Wait a minute. I think this is what this could be.’ It had something to do with his hip. The bone had ate through the hip.”

Lucas said Keating has kept a great attitude through it all.

“He has been very optimistic, very upbeat,” he said. He’s had a positive attitude through the whole thing. He’s never shown any negative reactions. He’s just had a good attitude through everything.”

Keating currently lives with his parents, with his mother serving as his main caregiver, and Lucas said they too have been optimistic.

“They’ve had a wonderful attitude,” she said. “He’s going to beat this. We can do this. We can conquer it.”

Keating will be away from most of his friends and families for some time, however.

“He will be quarantined in a motel for 30 days,” Lucas said. “At that time, his parents will also be in a motel for 30 days. We’re just doing it to help cover the financial cost of all that.”

Lucas said some cost assistance has been provided elsewhere as well.

“He’s got some time built up through work, and we’ve donated to him through work,” she said.

Keating's co-workers have even shown their support for the cause.

"I shaved all the guys' heads," she said. "They were some of them that were a little nervous. They were all more than willing and didn't hesitate at all to do it for them. We've also been selling silicon bracelets."

The bracelets read "108 NO ONE FIGHTS ALONE," and can be purchased for a donation by contacting Lucas at 316-854-5517 or Morgan Johnson at 316-854-5515.

"If you would like to make a donation to the auction, contact Misty or Morgan," Gant said.

Tickets for the fundraiser can be purchased through Lucas and Johnson and will also be sold at Perfect Timing Auto at 823 S. Kansas in Liberal or calling 620-624-2885.