

## Student Organizes Fundraiser for Five Year Old

By Sophie Braccini



Jane Coggins, bridesmaid at her aunt's wedding

Photo courtesy of the Coggins family

**S**pinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) is a term applied to a number of different disorders, all having in common a genetic cause and the manifestation of weakness due to loss of the motor neurons of the spinal cord and brainstem. About 1 in 40 people in this country carry the gene; little Jane Coggins was diagnosed with SMA at 11 months. She has extremely weak muscles; she is tube fed, and wheelchair-bound. She is extremely smart, as her speech therapist, Carol Lettko, immediately noticed. The Lafayette mother told Jane's story to her own daughter Kelsey, who was inspired to raise money to help the Coggins family purchase the equipment Jane

needs but that medical insurance will not cover.

"When my mother told me about Jane I felt I wanted to do something," said Kelsey, a junior at Miramonte High School. So she and her sister Krista embarked in a campaign to raise her peers' interest and get them involved. "I asked local teens and adults to share their artistic talents and donate their works of art," explained Kelsey, "the idea was to organize a fair with all the proceeds going to Jane. We also have local teen musicians from Miramonte that will play live music."

Kelsey's friends from Campolindo and Miramonte are helping out, some donating their creations,

some baking, others disseminating information about Jane. The fundraiser will be a craft fair held at the Lettko residence in Lafayette on July 25th from 3-7 p.m. Pottery donated by the Contra Costa Community College will be on sale as well as paintings and wood carving from art students. Other local artists have donated jewelry, photography work, baked goods, plants and many other items. Some donations will be part of a silent auction, including a stay in a condo in Cabo San Lucas and front row tickets to a Shark's game.

Lettko says she would like "to be able to get Jane a page turner because she loves to read, games for her computer, switch operated toys, dues for her acupuncturist, Chinese medicine doctor appointments and medicines, and co-pays for a much needed new manual wheelchair seating system, among other needs." Jane lives with her mother and grandparents in Walnut Creek.

For more information about the event, contact the Lettko family at [CJL164@aol.com](mailto:CJL164@aol.com) or [klettko@yahoo.com](mailto:klettko@yahoo.com). If artists want to donate art pieces for the auction they should contact Kelsey. The family of the little girl has created a fund to collect donations, those wishing to donate may do so one of two ways: Checks can be made out to Martha Lodge (Jane's grandmother) (FOB) For the Benefit of Jane Coggins, Account #1313 and mailed to US Bank, 3498 Mt. Diablo Blvd. Lafayette, CA 94549, or donate online by going to Jane's website at [www.janecoggins.com](http://www.janecoggins.com).