

## Communities come together for Bowen

By Mike Riley Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

On July 17 at the Limerick Township community centre from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., volunteers from both Limerick Township and Tudor and Cashel Township hosted a special roast beef dinner and prize draws to offer love and support for a local family, Erica and Teal Tripp, whose infant son Bowen is bravely living with a terminal illness. Hundreds of people in the community turned out for the event, and the organizers ran out of meals before 5 p.m., making this event a huge success.

The Tripp family received this heartbreaking news six weeks ago, when Bowen was diagnosed with a condition called Krabbe's disease. A rare genetic disorder, Krabbe's disease destroys the myelin, the protective coating, of the nerve cells in the brain and throughout the nervous system. While there is no cure, they have been managing Bowen's symptoms and keeping him comfortable with modern medicine, advice, support and care over the past weeks from Sick Kids' Hospital and Emily's House in Toronto.

In a statement released to friends, family and the community, Erica says that her family couldn't have gotten to this point without the help, support and care from a myriad of people.

“The nurses, doctors, social workers, PSWs and many other amazing people who have been helping us deal with such a difficult diagnosis. We can't thank our community of friends, family and neighbours enough for the never-ending stream of support,” she says.

Erica points out that Bowen is much more than his disease, however, and that he has taught them some valuable lessons in a short time; to love fully and unconditionally, to be patient and to not take any moment for granted.

Erica describes her son as a calm, strong, snuggly and brave little boy with a good sense of humour. Understandably, they are spending a lot of time with him giving him the best life possible and keeping him comfortable.

To support the Tripp family at this time, volunteers in the communities of Limerick and Tudor and Cashel came together to put on a roast beef dinner and a draw for prizes on Saturday, July 17 from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Limerick community centre. The roast beef dinner with all the fixings (potatoes, gravy, veggies, coleslaw and dessert) was \$15 per person, and they also had a draw with some locally donated items like a hand tooled leather belt with knife and knife holder, a cigar box guitar and many more items. Tickets for these draws went for \$5 each or three tickets for \$10.

The day of the dinner, hundreds of people showed up to show their support, and a full recreation centre parking lot and a large line up to the door reinforced this fact. So many community members came by in fact, that the organizers ran out of meals before 5 p.m., making this event a bonafide success.

At the July 19 Limerick Township council meeting, Councillor Ingo Weise revealed that the event had raised \$12,000 as of that morning, and the organizers were still counting. That included revenues from the dinners, the prize draws and donations. Erica says they are beyond grateful to have seen the community come together for the roast beef dinner event on July 17.

“We cannot thank everyone enough for their love for Bowen,” she says. “It makes us so happy to see how many people love him out there and want to help out.”