

Mother reaches goal to pay for daughter's surgery

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By Caroline Moses (Channel 9 – Baton Rouge)

BATON ROUGE, LA (WAFB) - A mother trying to raise the money to pay for a special surgery that will hopefully restore her daughter's sight has reached her goal thanks to a donation by women serving hard time in a Louisiana prison.

Teosha Moore needed \$50,000 to make it happen, but she knew it would take more than her own hands. Hundreds of female inmates at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women answered Trinity Schley's call for help. Together, they donated over \$13,000 toward the little girl's surgery. Trinity now has enough to travel all the way to China and get the stem cell injections she needs.

The four-year-old was born with a rare condition that left her blind, but a ground-breaking umbilical cord stem-cell surgery only available in China could restore her vision. "I never thought I was going to make it and it's just right on time, right when we needed it," said Teosha Moore. "A lot of us are in here for hurting people's lives or taking lives, so this was an opportunity to possibly give someone a life back," said Shanda Crain.

Crain is serving a life sentence on a murder charge. "I hurt a lot of people. I left my children at five, seven, and eight. They're now 21, 23, and 24 years old," she said. She never got to show her own children the kind of love and support she said they deserved. She said helping Trinity helps her heal. "In order to make a difference in a child's life, it's almost like you are just making a difference in your own child's life."

Inmates raised the money by holding various fundraisers within the prison. Trinity leaves for China late next month to have surgery. She and her mother will be there for a month. They promise to send pictures and keep everyone updated.

Softball tournament raises money for surgery

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By Tyana Williams

ST. FRANCISVILLE, LA (WAFB) - Twelve teams from around the metro area spent Saturday on the softball diamond, raising money to help pay for the surgery that could possibly give sight to a special little girl.

Trinity Schley, four, was born with a rare condition that left her blind. Her mom wants her to undergo a surgery that could help her see, but it costs \$60,000. About 300 people took to three fields at the West Feliciana Sports Complex to help make the dream a reality. Down by a set of bleachers, Trinity took pictures. While many of the teams were thinking about winning, they had a bigger goal in mind, helping Trinity get a special surgery. "Gonna go to China and open my eyes," said Trinity.

Teosha Moore says she found out her daughter, Trinity, was legally blind at three months old. She says a \$60,000 stem cell surgery only available in China, could allow her daughter to finally see. Moore raised \$10,000, but needed help with the rest. That's when the community stepped in to help. Some say it's only fitting because Trinity has already touched their lives. "She just brought everybody together for a good cause," said Cathy Fontenot, who works at Angola prison. "It's a gift she's given us. She's a little girl who is so positive and so happy."

Since seeing Trinity's story, communities everywhere are showing her just how much they want her to see. "Everybody really got attached. We replayed the story on Angola's open channel to the inmates, but also our staff was sitting there. A lot of them saw it," said Fontenot. Angola's inmates raised \$5,000 last month for Trinity, so the staff put together a softball tournament. Every penny raised will go toward Trinity's trip to China. Fontenot says the total amount raised by the prison will be about \$13,000 - \$15,000.

Moore says \$38,500 has been raised so far, but with tears rolling down her cheeks, she says the outpouring to help her little girl is more than she expected, especially because some people didn't realize little Trinity is the one they are trying to help.

For a few minutes, the tournament was stopped to give Trinity a bright yellow softball. "Here's a little ball that we signed Trinity," said Fontenot. "And you'll be able to see this hopefully when you get back from China." It's a moment Moore was waiting for. "It's emotional. I don't want to cry but, just... I mean, I don't even have words to describe. Whenever she start to see anything, it will be a blessing."

Trinity's mom has already booked their hospital stay in China. They plan to leave on October 1st. The surgery happens just weeks before Trinity turns five, on October 31st. Donations can be made by either visiting www.visionfortrinity.com and using a Paypal account or by going to any Neighbors Federal Credit Union and ask for "Trinity Schley Trip to China."

Prisoners donate money for child's surgery

Posted: Jul 16, 2009 5:24 PM CDT Updated: Jul 27, 2009 5:56 AM CDT

By Caroline Moses BATON ROUGE, LA (WAFB) - A special treatment in China could possibly restore sight to a four-year-old Baton Rouge girl, but the \$50,000 cost is more than her family can afford, so strangers who have heard her story are donating money to help, even inmates at the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

Trinity Schley first shared her story on June 28th. She can't see through her eyes, but somehow, she sees into the souls of the most unlikely among us. "Grown men that maybe wouldn't answer the call to some things really broke down when it came to this particular person," said Ron Hicks, an inmate from Opelousas. "I feel like I can't explain the feeling," said a sympathetic Rickie Westfall, another inmate. "It's in my heart."

The men heard about Trinity's opportunity travel to China and possibly restore her sight. They started collecting cash from almost every inmate and any amount would do. "This is a moment that God is reaching out for us to touch somebody else's life," Hicks said. Together, they raised about \$5,000, almost all of it within a day. "I never thought I'd get a call from the Louisiana State Penitentiary," said Teosha Moore, Trinity's mom. Angola's prison radio station spread the word, telling inmates Trinity's tale. They responded without hesitation.

"This is a criminal. He's in prison. No, these are human beings that can be touched!" said Hicks. "I'm touched," said Westfall. "It's just a blessing that people would care for my daughter and are here to support us. We just really are overwhelmed you want to help my daughter see. Thank you!" Moore told the inmates over the airwaves. Prisoners answered the family's prayers. "I believe in the long run, she'll see again," said Westfall.

Inmates can earn money from selling their crafts and concessions at the Angola Rodeo. They also can collect money from their families. Trinity still needs to collect over \$30,000 to pay for the surgery. Donations can be made by either visiting www.visionfortrinity.com and using a Paypal account or by going to any Neighbors Federal Credit Union and ask for "Trinity Schley Trip to China."