

COASTALPEOPLE

by Lindsey Adkison



Family reaching out for a miracle

Amy Johnson's eyes well up with tears when she talks about her 8-year-old daughter, Hailey Finley.

She's a sick little girl, and every day Johnson finds herself hoping for a miracle.

Hailey has an uncommonly severe case of the common skin ailment eczema, that has now led to a life-threatening condition.

"We've been dealing with this since she was a year old. It just comes and goes. But her skin has never been clear, we've been fighting it for seven years," Johnson said.

"She's seen so many doctors, and they're all good doctors. I always hope for a miracle, but it's never come. Now she's been seeing Dr. (Lee) Heery for almost a year. She's really gone above and beyond for her."

But the disease is more than just constantly itchy skin and rashes for Hailey. It controls her life.

"She can't play outside. She can't go to the beach because she'll burn. She has to wear long sleeves and pants everywhere she goes," Johnson said. "She has no self-esteem. People stare at her and she gets so upset."

When Hailey's skin is ag-



Provided photo

Hailey Finley, 8, has a severe skin ailment that has led to a life-threatening condition. A foundation has been set up to help her family while Hailey undergoes treatment.

gravated, she is at risk for infection. And that's what happened recently.

Hailey spent a week in the Brunswick hospital of Southeast Georgia Health System with a staph infection. It's severe and it could prove to be deadly.

"It's called MRSA. It's a staph infection that could kill you. That's what she was treated for in the hospital here, but now they're going to send her to Emory, in Atlanta. Her white blood cell count won't go down, and we don't know why," Johnson said.

Johnson has recently hooked-up with Angel Flight, a non-profit service of small-airplane pilots who provide transportation for people to out-of-area medical treatment. She and Hailey will fly out today to Atlanta. Johnson couldn't be more grateful for the lift.

"(Pilot) Jack Cantrell is doing this out of the kindness of his heart," she said.

Kindness is something that both Johnson and Hailey can use these days.

A foundation has been set up to help Johnson, a single

mother, while she is away from work and at the hospital with her daughter.

Life will have to go on, all the same. She will still have to pay bills and provide for her 15-year-old son. Not to mention, the upcoming medical bills.

"It's called the Hailey Finley Foundation. My friend set up the account for me at First Glynn Bank. It's just for medicine that's not covered by insurance and the travel back and forth. If someone is interested they can call and ask about the Hailey Finley-Amy Johnson Foundation," she said. "There is also a Hailey Finley Facebook page that my friend set up."

Even with her pain and suffering, Hailey remains the sweet, loving child she's always been. But naturally, she's worried about what will happen to her when she gets to Atlanta.

"She's so sweet and behaves very well. Of course, she's got a lot of questions. She's just confused and is going through a lot. It's awful," Johnson said. "All she wants in the world is to be a normal little girl."

Hopefully, normalcy is something Hailey will know very soon.