

February 13, 2007

- Lewiston, ID



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Local couple promotes Congenital Heart Information Network



Heather and Paul Markwalter talk about their effort to increase awareness about congenital heart defects.

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By Autumn Coleman

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LEWISTON - Valentine's Day is next week, but it isn't the only reason to think about the heart. It also happens to be Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week, put on by the Congenital Heart Information Network, also known as CHIN.



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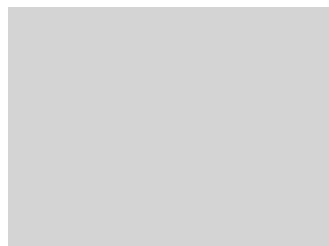
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In an effort to bring more awareness about the problem to the Valley area, a Lewiston couple is planning an event for the holiday. Paul and Heather Markwalter's infant daughter died because of a congenital heart defect.

"Our daughter was born with a congenital heart defect," said Paul Markwalter. "She had nine surgeries, not all of them dealing with the heart problem. Actually, she only had one surgery dealing with her heart. But, the other surgeries were complications from the original birth defect, TAPVR (Total Anomalous Pulmonary Venous Return) was what it was called. So, it kind of really hits home to us."

It is estimated that 40,000 babies are born each year with congenital heart defects in the United States alone. Paul and his wife Heather suffered a terrible loss and they know they're not alone, which is why they're so passionate about the upcoming event at Walla Walla Community College on Wednesday.

"We just want to provide the platform for everyone to help decide what the needs of the community are," said Heather, Idaho State CHIN coordinator. "I think everyone is going to have some different expertise and families of people with congenital heart disease will be able to give us their advice and input as well. So, I think it's just going to continue to grow. And, in five years I hope that we have something every day of the seven day event and awareness week."

The Markwalters invite everyone to come and attend the get together with the hope that awareness of this disease will bring change. Their daughter Kaia Lynn lived only 10 weeks, but her short life may end up saving others.

"Our main thing is we hope to just promote awareness so that perhaps we don't lose another child, not to say our own, but the Valley doesn't lose, or the region doesn't lose another child born with a congenital heart disease or congenital heart defect," Paul said.

The event takes place on Valentine's Day at Walla Walla Community College from 12:00 p.m. until 1:00 p.m. Pizza will be served.

For more information, or to RSVP, call Heather Markwalter at (509) 758-1721 or (208) 798-3471.

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