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Shooting teams Shoot for the Cure at Waukee benefit

Lars L. Hulsebus

McKayla Kurtz of Waukee was surrounded by strangers with guns, but there was no need to be afraid. Each shot that rang out nearby represented more money to fight cystic fibrosis, a disease 3-year-old McKayla has fought since her first weeks of life.

McKayla was one of several cystic fibrosis sufferers on hand Friday and Saturday at the New Pioneer Gun Club in Waukee for Shoot for the Cure, an event expected to raise more than \$25,000 for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

The event was the brainchild of pediatric surgeon Mike Irish, who thought a shooting competition could attract a different group of donors than those who regularly contribute to more common charity events like golf tournaments.

Kathy Salisbury, director of the Iowa chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, was happy to have an opportunity to educate people about the disease, which significantly shortens the lives of those who have the disease. Gun club president Kurt Lehman was just as glad to educate people about shooting sports and to rebut some common stereotypes about gun enthusiasts.

Four-person teams paid \$800 to compete in the VIP Celebrity Shoot on Friday evening, which included former Gov. Terry Branstad. Five-person teams paid \$500 (to compete on Saturday).

Individuals and area companies donated products and services for an auction, held Saturday night. About 30 corporations gave money to sponsor the event, and expert shooters from around Iowa donated their time to attract amateurs.

The nonprofit Cystic Fibrosis Foundation uses donations to research and invest in treatments and possible cures for the disease, lobbies government officials for research money, and provides support for patients and their families.

McKayla's father, Matt, has been active in the organization since she was diagnosed. Matt also likes to shoot. He was glad to see a good crowd of shooters on Friday willing to donate to his favorite cause.

"I just hope we can continue to do it in years to come," he said.

- L. Lars Hulsebus

