



## Kenston's Henry drives with passion for ALS cure

By SALI McSHERRY

Kenston High School golfer Nicki Henry still yearns for her grandmother's homemade Whoopie pies she devoured when she was a little girl.

Her grandparents, Carol and Jack Dovishaw, are her biggest fans on and off the golf course. Nicki, a junior, became the school's first girl golfer to qualify for the state tournament. She finished in a tie for 10th place after shooting a 78 last weekend in Columbus and earned All-Ohio honors.

A National Honor Student student, Nicki also has another passion — helping to raise money for research to find a cure for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a fatal neuromuscular disease her grandmother was diagnosed with last February. The disease also is known as Lou Gehrig's disease for the Hall of Fame baseball player.

Nicki founded "Birdies for ALS," along with a Web site. This year through sponsorships from friends and family, she has raised \$7,000 by shooting 55 birdies this season. The money was donated to Cleveland Clinic's research efforts for ALS.

As she was researching ALS on the Internet, she found Bright Side of the Road, an organization that raises money specifically for ALS research at Cleveland Clinic.

"She looked us up, and found we were in her own back yard," Bright Side of the Road board member Jack Subel said.



Kenston High School golfer Nicki Henry founded "Birdies for ALS" in honor of her grandmother, Carol Dovishaw, who was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis earlier this year.

Chagrin Falls resident Barry Winovich, who was diagnosed with ALS, his wife Kelley, family and a close-knit circle of friends, founded the organization in 2006. The goal was to raise \$1.5 million over a five-year period for an endowed chair for ALS research at

Cleveland Clinic, which is filled by one of the best and brightest experts and researchers, Dr. Erik Pioro, Mr. Subel said.

The foundation's biggest fund-raiser, "First Waltz," featuring some of the best bands in Northeast Ohio, will be held

Nov. 20 at the House of Blues, he said.

Mr. Subel said Bright Side of the Road gave Nicki some ideas, linked her Web site to theirs', and provided support for a tailor-made e-commerce program to accommodate donations. He said he and other board members were so inspired by Nicki's story and her passion to help that as a result, the organization is supporting athletes who want to make a difference, gathering sponsors and raising money for ALS research, he said, who will be called the "band of hands."

With the help of people like Nicki, Mr. Subel said, the foundation plans to give over \$1 million by the beginning of next year to Cleveland Clinic's endowed chair.

Nicki initially was inspired by Ladies Professional Golf Association player Cristie Kerr and her "Birdies for Breast Cancer" foundation, and joined the fight. In her 2008 golf season, she made 37 birdies and with sponsorships from her friends and family, raised \$1,000 for breast cancer research.

Nicki's grandmother always has been an important influence, she said, as her sponsor for her confirmation at Holy Angels Church in Bainbridge, and as an example in being faithful.

She reminisces about being a kid and visiting her grandparents in Erie, Pa., and their outings to Waldameer Amusement Park, bike rides through a park on Lake Erie and eating at Sally's Diner, memories she will treasure, along with knowing she's helping to find a cure for others diagnosed with ALS.