

Social Media helps friend in need

By Cindy Hval, SR

On April 9, I got this text from my friend and fellow Spokesman Review correspondent, Jill Barville: "I'm flying to Germany tomorrow so I won't be answering texts, calls or emails."

Her daughter Emily was a 17 year-old exchange student studying in Germany. Emily suffered a serious medical emergency and had been hospitalized. My heart broke for my friend.

Powerless to do anything but pray, I waited for news. When it came it wasn't good. Emily was too sick to come home. With Jill's permission I shared the news on Facebook and within minutes a mutual friend offered to set up a medical fundraising site to help with the expenses the family was incurring.

Finally! Something I could do besides pray. We began to promote the site via Facebook and Twitter and as I write generous friends, family and strangers have given \$4,100.

On Wednesday after a 20-hr flight, Jill brought Emily home. Emily's longterm prognosis is hopeful, but the family is just beginning to sort through bills, copays, and deductibles.

At 8 AM this morning I shared their story at a gathering of social media people in downtown Spokane. Morning is not my thing, but we're winding up the fundraising this weekend and I wanted to update those who'd been following Jill's story on Twitter.

Critics say social media is a distraction the alienates us from real social interaction. I disagree. This morning people I'd never met introduced themselves and asked how Emily was doing. Strangers dropped cash into a bucket with Emily's picture on it.

Social media can be more than just a platform to promote businesses, individuals or celebrities. It can be a bridge connecting a group of strangers to a family in need.

<http://www.youcaring.com/medical-fundraiser/barville-family-medical-expenses/54639>