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Lincoln's shot



JOHN PENDYGRAFT | Times

Every night, before he falls asleep, Lincoln DeLuna's parents bend over his bed and sing him *The Goodnight Song*. Lincoln recently learned to sign the tune.

The answer.

"Take a chance on him, please."

BY LANE DEGREGORY • Times Staff Writer

By summer's end, their world had shrunk. They had stopped going out, even for food. Uber Eats brought meals to their Tampa home. Publix delivered groceries.

Maggie Hoyle-Germann and her husband, Anthony DeLuna, told friends not to come over; they might bring germs. Only nurses and therapists were allowed. Maggie and Anthony couldn't take any chances.

Any minute, a doctor might call. And their terminally ill son, Lincoln, would have to be as healthy as possible. So he could get his shot at a cure.

"I sent UF another email," Maggie told Anthony one Tuesday. "I call, beg, rant, cry, pray. I don't know what else to do."

They had taken a break from working in their home offices and were eating Chick-fil-A on the couch. Though it was well past noon, neither had showered. Anthony was wearing pajama pants. Maggie had pulled her hair into a tangled ponytail. She hadn't put on makeup in a month. What was the point?

For more than four years, ever since their son had been born with X-linked myotubular myopathy, they

had been waiting.

They had never questioned the quality of Lincoln's life, whether it was worth his discomfort, tying him to machines to keep him alive. Because the cure was coming. This existence, all his limitations, would be temporary.

But now, instead of looking ahead, they started looking back, regretting all they had postponed: Never even trying to take Lincoln to the zoo or Disney World, or a movie.

"We saw the finish line," Anthony said. "But they kept moving it."

A year had passed since the first boy had gotten gene therapy.

Lincoln had been scheduled to get treatment on three different dates. But the University of Florida, his site for the clinical trial, had been battling with the drug manufacturing company over safety protocols. Until they changed, doctors there wouldn't treat any more boys.

"I'm so sick of this," Anthony said. "We've driven up to Gainesville so many times. We've put him through

all their paces. He's been poked, prodded and tested. They even took a chunk of muscle out of his leg! For what? Will this all really be worth it?"

They had been anxious about the toll the trial would take on Lincoln. They had never worried about what the wait would do to them. They were gaining weight, losing hope.

Maggie refused to go to a bachelorette party for one of her best friends. She couldn't face all those happy people, couldn't fake caring about the engagement ring.

"It's like bandwidth. You only have so much," Anthony told her. "There's nothing left. Just getting through each day drains all your reserve."

Maggie started calling her therapist every week. Anthony was staying up all night playing *The Witcher 3*, a video game where he got to be a hero.

"Every year Lincoln lives, I feel like I lose another three off my life," Anthony told Maggie.

A new nurse had recently asked how old Anthony was and guessed mid 40s. He was 28.

» See LINCOLN, 10A

THE CHAPTERS

THE CURSE

THE HOPE

THE BOY

THE SCIENCE

THE LIFE

THE RESCUE

THE WAIT

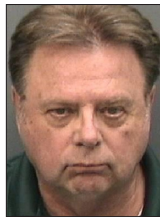
THE ANSWER

THE JOURNEY

Watch the entire documentary at tampabay.com/lincolnsshot.

'It's God's Money' recruited listeners

A Christian radio show's host and his accountant face trial for cheating naive investors.



Gary Gauthier portrayed himself as a trustworthy man of faith.



Accountant David Dreslin partnered in the business until 2009.

BY SUSAN TAYLOR MARTIN

Times Senior Correspondent

In the early 2000s, many listeners throughout the Tampa Bay area tuned in Saturday mornings to a Christian radio station and the program *It's God's Money*.

All money belongs to God, just like everything else on earth, host Gary Gauthier told his audience. But God wanted people to use what he created, including real estate. And Gauthier knew of some great real estate opportunities.

A condo on St. Petersburg's Beach Drive. Waterfront property in South Tampa. Townhouses on Treasure Island. Convinced they were dealing with an honest, trustworthy man of faith, scores of listeners gave Gauthier their sav-

ings and retirement funds to invest in projects like those.

"Being a Christian, we were just really open to wanting to do business with other Christians," Marilyn White, a retired Verizon customer service rep, would later say. "He talked about scriptures and the Bible, and we were just very comfortable in his presence."

White and her husband bought into Gauthier's wealth-building pitch. So did a motel manager, a private investigator, a postal worker, a steel company executive, two doctors and the former director of financial services for the Pasco County clerk of court. They were promised sizable returns on their investments — as

» See MONEY, 8A

NATION

Lawmakers head home for the holidays

The border-budget battle ends with a shutdown. Here's what it means. **4A**

OPINION

Get serious about texting while driving

It's dangerous to hold a cell-phone to talk or text while driving. It should be illegal. **14A**

FLORIDIAN

It's 'Snow Blast,' not 'Chipped Ice Time'

How do you make it snow here? Big money, big machines and a guy with a dream. **1L**

LOCAL

Post-hurricane holiday style

From trees made of 2 by 4s to ornaments cut from shingles, the people in Panama City who survived Michael are getting festive with the debris. **1B**

Mostly clear skies

8 a.m. 48° Noon 63° 4 p.m. 65° 8 p.m. 56°

10% chance of rain
More, back page of Sports



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