



Hudson Zednik, 6, shows his parents, Frank and Shakira Zednik, how he can stand Sunday in his hospital room at Randall Children’s Hospital where he is recuperating from a rare polio-like illness called Acute Flaccid Myelitis.

HUDSON: TRCI held fundraiser for the family

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way back from paralysis. He can wiggle three fingers on his right side and move his left arm up and down. His left leg is the strongest of his limbs. During his first time off the ventilator, the boy struggled because of paralysis in his right diaphragm.

The specific cause of Hudson’s AFM isn’t known. The CDC is trying to understand more about the disease. Twelve vials of Hudson’s spinal fluid were sent to the CDC for analysis.

Dr. Paul Cieslak, medical director for communicable diseases at the Oregon Public Health Division, said West Nile virus can trigger AFM.

“West Nile can cause it in a fraction of patients,” Cieslak said. “One of our four cases did test positive for West Nile virus.”

A class of viruses called enteroviruses with similarities to the polio virus may trigger AFM, but scientists don’t know why some people – maybe one in a million – react while most others don’t.

“The vast majority get infected and don’t have any symptoms whatsoever,” Cieslak said.

Frank described Hudson as an active kid who loves to play baseball and soccer. “From the time he woke up in the morning until bedtime, it was go, go, go,” Frank said. “His personality has not left him. He has every nurse wrapped around his little finger.”

A few weeks ago,



Hudson Zednik, 6, shares a moment with his parents, Frank and Shakira Zednik, on Sunday in his hospital room at Randall Children’s Hospital.

Hudson started using an electric wheelchair.

“He’s cruising around in that,” Frank said. “It is a huge spark for him to be mobile.”

Hudson recently had a chance to convey his Christmas wish list to Santa, who visited the hospital escorted by 20 police officers. Because Hudson is here, that’s where Christmas will be, too. In the boy’s room is a tiny artificial Christmas tree. One recent day, a therapist gathered a bucket of snow and Hudson engaged in a snowball fight in the hospital gym.

The sight warmed Shakira. The medical crisis had started with little encouragement from Hudson’s doctors. Hudson could only blink for yes and no and give a weak thumbs up.

“It was rough,” Shakira said. “They said this could be the way it is.”

Last Sunday in his hospital room, the boy showed how far he has come. With just a light

push on the back from his parents, Hudson rose to a standing position to cheering from his parents and grandparents.

“He’s not a quitter,” Shakira said.

Hudson’s parents won’t have to fret as much about expenses or missing work, thanks to generous co-workers, leaving them free to focus on Hudson.

After Frank learned he didn’t have to worry about his job for a while, he finished out the week and then went to Baker City to pack up his home. The family, which also includes Zednik’s two teenage stepsons, recently moved to Troutdale to be near the therapists Hudson will need for at least the next few years. The Department of Corrections is arranging a potential hardship transfer to the Columbia River Correctional Institution in Portland for Frank.

The outpouring of generosity came from elsewhere in the Department of Corrections, too. Two

“His personality has not left him. He has every nurse wrapped around his little finger.”

— Frank Zednik, Hudson’s father

Rivers Correctional Institution did a fundraiser. DOC employees around the state donated time off.

“I hadn’t even been at EOCI for six months,” Frank said. “They have been amazing.”

Jackie Peck, supervising executive assistant at EOCI, wasn’t surprised by the outpouring.

“We have an amazing family here,” she said. “I didn’t expect any less. They truly care about each other. Every time something happens, they step up, dive in and donate.”

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TRAINS: Union Pacific operates more than 32,000 miles of track across 23 states

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Pacific were found as part of a two-year examination of tracks across the U.S. used to haul crude. They include some of the same lax inspection problems blamed in the Mosier derailment, federal officials said.

Enforcement actions against the company have not been finalized.

Spokeswoman Calli Hite says Union Pacific is committed to making its lines safer and has fixed the problems identified by the government as potential violations. She characterized the agreement disclosed Friday as the result of a collaborative effort with federal railroad officials.

“All of the issues, the 800 that were noted, have been addressed,” she said. “We did everything as soon as we talked to them and knew we needed to do it.”

Federal Railroad Administrator Sarah Feinberg said the agreement raises the bar on safety.

“This compliance agreement requires Union Pacific to go above and beyond existing regulations,” she said.

The oil industry has become heavily reliant on trains in recent years because of limited pipeline capacity in the booming oil patch of the Northern Plains and the oil sands region of western Canada.

Omaha, Nebraska-based Union Pacific operates more than 32,000 miles of track across 23 states.

The safety measures included in the agreement with the FRA will apply to all rail lines used to haul oil and other hazardous liquids, passengers, explosives, radioactive materials and poisonous gases. That includes about 22,500 miles of tracks, Hite said.

They include an inventory of all curves in the track

that are three degrees or greater across that network and walking inspections every 120 days on tracks that have the type of bolts involved in the Mosier accident. Those inspections have to occur every 30 days in the part of the network that includes the Columbia River Gorge.

Previously, Union Pacific said it would voluntarily take some of the same steps within the gorge, a designated national scenic area popular with boaters and windsurfers along the Oregon-Washington border.

The safety agreement was welcomed by Oregon elected officials including Gov. Kate Brown and U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley. All have called for a halt to oil trains traveling through the gorge.

Wyden and Merkley said in a statement Friday that “banning oil trains...is the only way to completely eliminate future derailments.”

The Democratic lawmakers added that they would closely monitor the railroad agency after President-elect Donald Trump takes office next month to ensure the terms of the Union Pacific agreement are upheld.

At least 27 oil trains have been involved in major derailments, fires or oil spills in the United States and Canada in the past decade, according to an AP analysis of accident records.

The trains travel through more than 400 counties across the U.S. to reach refineries on the West, East and Gulf coasts, according to the AP analysis.

A 2013 derailment killed 47 people when a runaway oil train from North Dakota jumped the tracks and exploded in Lac-Megantic, Quebec.

Damage from that accident has been estimated at \$1.2 billion or higher.

AVALANCHE: Director of the center says Oregon has had relatively few avalanche fatalities

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broad outdoor experience and knowledge of the local mountains, which makes him a good fit for the position.

“I’m really excited to see Victor take the reins,” Pridmore-Brown said. “We’re thrilled to have him.”

As director, McNeil will oversee a team of snow observers whose job is to monitor avalanche conditions on the ground. The center also maintains three weather stations, at Salt Creek Summit and Mount Howard in the Wallowa Mountains, and at Antelope Lakes in the Elkhorns.

The goal is to compile information that can lower the risk of accidents and fatalities, while promoting safe backcountry travel, Pridmore-Brown said.

“Oregon has had relatively few avalanche fatalities, but the fatalities that have been in Oregon have been clustered in northeast Oregon,” he said.

One incident happened earlier this year, when Rand — an experienced backcountry skier, guide and observer — was killed after being swept down 1,200 feet in an avalanche. It was the fourth backcountry skiing fatality in the Wallowa Mountains since 2009.

Rand was hired as director of the Wallowa Avalanche

Center in 2015, and his death was a personal blow for everyone, Pridmore-Brown said. The center had high hopes under Rand’s leadership, and the tragedy left behind a void for the group’s board of directors to fill.

“We, as the board of directors, had a very clear picture of where we wanted the center to go and what our mission is,” Pridmore-Brown said. “That was never in doubt.”

Enter McNeil, who has spent past seasons as an observer for the avalanche center while guiding backcountry trips for Wallowa Alpine Huts. McNeil was already prepping weekly avalanche advisories for the coming season before he was hired Monday.

Connelly Brown, owner and operator of Wallowa Alpine Huts, said the avalanche center plays a critical role in preparing backcountry skiers for what to expect on the mountain.

Wallowa Alpine Huts has been in business since 1980, renting camps and offering guides for backcountry skiers in the Eagle Cap Wilderness. Brown said they have forged a symbiotic relationship with the avalanche center, and several of his staff — McNeil included — double as observers.

“What the center provides is a resource for decision-making about

where to go skiing, and what to do when we get there,” Brown said. “That’s part of the experience.”

Conditions are already excellent for backcountry skiers in the Wallows, Brown said. A series of storms battered the mountains, dumping up to 3 feet of snow at the cabins and 5 feet in basins. Such a strong start has made the snow deep and stable, Brown said.

Melissa Webb, hydrologist with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, said the current snow-water equivalent, or amount of water contained within snow, is 111 percent of normal for the area, including the Grande Ronde, Powder, Burnt and Imnaha river basins.

“We’re always happy to have such a strong early start to the snow season,” Webb said. “Certainly for folks out enjoying the snow, it’s a good start to the year.”

Eastern Oregon might not be the most famous backcountry terrain, or the easiest to access, Pridmore-Brown said. But it definitely has its rewards.

“The mountains are truly spectacular,” he said. “We’re just trying to reduce the risk and number of accidents out there.”

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