



**"Too Fast & Too Furious"** — Tribal member Nathan Rolston, a.k.a. "Nate the Skate" wound up the racing season on a winning note by placing first in his heat at the Sunset Speedway in Banks, Oregon. Rolston has been racing his stripped-down '79 Chevrolet Monte Carlo for four seasons, with the help of a half-dozen local sponsors. Rolston said he races more for the thrill and camaraderie than for the prize money, which is usually less than \$100.



Photos by Peta Tinda

# Paying For Medical Care In America

■ The Schulte family has pulled together to get 18-year-old Amanda a new heart and lungs.

By Ron Karten

Tribal member Amanda Jones Schulte needs a heart transplant.

"She's a bright young gal," said Tribal Council member Valerie Sheker-Robertson, "and anything that we can do to help."

The Tribe contributed \$1,000 to help cover some of the expenses of one of the family's stays near the Stanford University Medical Center, where the operation will be performed. In addition, at a raffle held during the pow-wow, the family raised another \$1,000.

The Schulte family is among the growing ranks of transplant families whose lives are turned upside down to pay for lifesaving but exorbitant surgeries. With medication for Amanda currently costing more than \$5,000 a month and not covered by either of the family's two health insurance policies, the financial prospects are not good. The family expects that preparations for the surgery and the surgery itself will cost as much as \$1 million, with more to come in follow-up treatment.

A good chunk will be covered by insurance, but the family, which is double-covered, still wonders if outright poverty will be the result of paying for the many parts of this giant effort that the insurance companies decline to pay for.

According to the family, expenses not covered by insurance go beyond prescription drugs necessitated by the transplant. They include co-payments and deductibles, travel, lodging and food expenses for patient and family during pre-transplant evaluation and the three to four months following the transplant, loss of income, possibly anti-rejection medication and air-ambulance for transportation at the time of the transplant or other emergency.

Because the family lives 100 miles from the hospital, and because the

family has to be prepared to be at the hospital on two-and-a-half hours' notice, the Schultes can't rely on their

known."

They know well enough how many things are out of their control.



**Bette Davis Eyes** — Tribal member Amanda Jones Schulte, 18, spent her time at the pow-wow raising money for a heart-lung transplant. Raffle tickets brought in \$1,000 for what the family fears may be a million dollar operation. Off and on in a wheelchair, off and on attached to an oxygen tank, Amanda fights her illness for time with friends and for doing things that the rest of us take for granted, like a trip to the mall.

car. "We can make it in two-and-a-half hours in good traffic," said Tribal member Tracy Schulte, Amanda's mom, "but what if there's a traffic tie-up?" They have to have an air ambulance on standby.

The average waiting time for a heart and lungs donation is 18-24 months, according to Tracy. Since March, when Amanda was tested and accepted as a heart-lung candidate, the family has gone into high gear organizing and fund-raising. "We're trying to be as prepared as possible for anything we can handle," said Tracy.

Can Amanda hold out that long? "As we sit here today," said Tracy, "we think she can wait, but that's the un-

known."

Amanda was born with a hole in her heart which prevents her from making enough oxygen for her body. The principle part of the problem is called Eisenmenger Syndrome, but the lack of oxygen has weakened her lungs, so that now, if she gets a new heart, the pressure on her lungs will be too great.

Amanda was diagnosed with the problem when she was only three, but the family now knows that had she been diagnosed at birth or soon after, her lungs, at least, could have been saved.

When Amanda was in the hospital one time, she was parked next to another child in need of a heart transplant, and she said, "If I only just

needed a heart."

"Sometimes I can talk about it," said Claudia George, Amanda's grandmother, who lives with husband, Tribal Elder Tony George, in the Elder Housing development. "Sometimes it really upsets me. We've always been very close," she said of her granddaughter.

Although doctors said that Amanda might not live past 12 with her condition, she was nearly 18 last October when she passed out at home, essentially went through heart failure, Tracy said, and was rushed to the hospital, where the family discovered another aspect that has flown out of their control. Local hospitals are not equipped to deal with patients like Amanda. And so began the world of air ambulances for the Schultes.

"I don't have a lot of money or anything," said Claudia George. Following this incident, she said to herself, "but you know what, this is my goal, every six weeks I'm going to spend a week down there with Amanda and my daughter. Amanda and I are so close and I need to be where I'm needed."

Amanda left school after the October experience, which she said was "OK. I still stay in touch with my friends." Saving energy, however, is now a big thing, for a girl with plenty of interests.

"I can't do much activity now at all," said Amanda, her big beautiful eyes wide open but looking tired.

The family is soliciting contributions, which may be made to:

**Help Hand Amanda Heart & Lungs Organization c/o Oak Valley Community Bank**  
 4120 B Dale Rd  
 Modesto, CA 95356  
 Acct # 007 000847

Photo by Peta Tinda