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FAMILY SEEKS HELP AND HOPE FOR MIRACLE CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Three Months Left to Help Fund a Robotic Walker for 7-Year-Old Fiona

ST. LOUIS, Mo.—Seven years ago, Tonja Ross experienced a miracle: she learned she was pregnant after doctors told her that she would never be able to conceive. To assist her miracle daughter Fiona Marcella Italiano, who has Down syndrome and several other health concerns, Tonja is asking the community for their help through a fundraising campaign for a robotic walker with the nonprofit Help Hope Live.

At age 37, Tonja lost her left Fallopian tube and ovary. Doctors gave her the news that she would no longer be able to conceive a child. At age 44, Tonja and her fiancée, Anthony, learned that they were expecting. “We were ecstatic,” said Tonja.

20 weeks into the pregnancy, Tonja and Anthony learned that their child would be born with Down syndrome, a rare heart defect, and holoprosencephaly, or HPE—a rare brain abnormality that dropped Fiona’s chance of survival in the womb to 3%. If she managed to make it to infancy, her odds would drop to a 1% survival chance within her first six months of life.

Once again, Fiona defied the odds: Tonja and Anthony’s miracle will turn eight years old in October.

Tonja has continued to fight for her daughter’s health and happiness, even as she is living with a breast cancer diagnosis herself. She came across a mobility device that she believed would significantly improve her daughter’s day to day: a robotic walker called a Trexo. “This device would allow Fiona to walk independently,” said Tonja. “Though she is wheelchair bound, she moves her feet and shows a strong desire to walk. I believe that in time she WILL walk, and that is our dream.”

Insurance has refused to cover the cost of a Trexo, leaving Tonja on the hook for the out-of-pocket cost. With help from a funding source, Fiona’s family was able to bring the device home for short-term use. However, they need to raise \$35,000 within three months to keep the device. They’ve partnered with the national nonprofit Help Hope Live to start a fundraising campaign. Donate now at:

<https://helphopelive.org/campaign/18579/>



Help Hope Live

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Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law, and all funds raised will be managed by the nonprofit to cover verified medical and related expenses. Help Hope Live verifies medical and financial need for every patient. To learn other ways to give and get involved with Team Fiona, call the nonprofit at 800-642-8399. Follow Fiona's journey to walk [on Facebook](#) or [TikTok](#).

"She has already walked the equivalency of a football field with the Trexo," said Tonja. "It is miraculous! I have seen her fiery spirit and determination to succeed."

Help Hope Live is a national nonprofit that specializes in engaging communities in secure, tax-deductible fundraising campaigns for people who need a transplant or are affected by a catastrophic injury or illness. Since 1983, campaigns organized by Help Hope Live have raised over \$150 million to pay patient expenses.

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