



Staff photo by John Taggart

Family and friends work on the Card family garden Saturday. From left, Courtney Karkoska, Max Card, Michelle Karkoska and Madison "Maddie" Card plant flowers in memory of Michele Card.

Family commemorates mother by tradition of planting flowers

Group organizes yearly events to keep children's memories of her alive

By **BAJEERAH LOWE**
Staff Writer

EAST PIKELAND — With shovels in hand, 9-year-old Max Card and 4-year-old Maddie Card began what seemed a full day's work out in the sun Saturday, planting flowers to remember their mother by.

The garden began three years ago. It will grow every year until the children turn 18, thanks to the annual delivery of flowers by

volunteers from Mommy's Light Lives On. Mommy's Light Lives On is a nonprofit organization that works in a manner similar to that of Make-A-Wish Foundation, only their work isn't a one-time event. The aim of the organization is to keep alive a tradition or simple pleasure that children shared with their mothers who either are in life-threatening situations or are deceased. By repeating the tradition each year until the child is 18, the memory of their mothers can be kept alive, said the organization's president, Laura Munts.

The Cards first became involved with Mommy's Light three years ago when the

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Mother

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nurse taking care of the children's mother, Michele, told them about the organization.

The children's father, Charlie Card, said Mommy's Light entered their lives around the time he and Michele were preparing the children for their mother's passing. "It was hard to talk about, but we knew we had to talk about it," he said.

Mommy's Light volunteers came out that first year at

Michele's request, bringing flowers for the children to plant. Munts said Michele was so happy the tradition would be carried on even after she died.

Since that first year, the event has remained the same, although the color scheme and types of plants have changed. One month ago, Munts met with Max and Maddie to ask them what they wanted to plant this year. Maddie asked for purple, red, orange and pink flowers, while Max requested white and red flowers.

Saturday, the day before Mother's Day, the two siblings,

along with their father and family friends, planted trays of flowers and flowering shrubs delivered by the volunteers.

Along with the flowers, Munts brought each child a wheeling cart to keep their tools in, a purple hose for Maddie to water her flowers with and a bigger shovel for Max "since he has grown."

Max said planting the flowers lets him remember his mom. As he dug the deep holes for each of the plants, he said he hoped the plants would grow like the ones they planted last year. "I had black-eyed Susans and roses, and they are really big," he said.

In between helping her brother dig the holes for the plants, Maddie looked through her new tool cart, sorting through the seeds and hummingbird food inside. She said she wanted to plant the seeds.

While Max seems to understand the significance of the annual tradition, Charlie Card said he doesn't think Maddie grasps the concept much beyond planting flowers.

But Munts said in time she

thinks Maddie will understand what it means to carry on the tradition.

The traditions the children involved in Mommy's Light continue are relatively simple, like the plantings for the Card children. It all comes down to keeping the memories of their mothers alive and close to their hearts, said Munts.

"If you have to grieve, what a beautiful way to do it," she explained. "Children grieve differently than adults. They can't grieve 24 hours per day. They are happy one minute and crying the next. This gives that child that special moment to remember."

After dropping off the plants and tools for the Cards, Munts said while the reason they are there is sad, the moment itself is uplifting. "Thinking about Max when he's 18 and has a huge garden to remember his mother by is what keeps me going every day," she said.

For more information about Mommy's Light and its upcoming fund-raising concert, log on to mommys-light.org.