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# F | Accent

ARTS & TRAVEL

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It's the  
**Season to Share**

The families in this special section are your neighbors,  
and they need your help.

# Mom needs help to care for child with cerebral palsy

By Tony Doris

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As her mother pushes her on a special swing at school, 5-year-old Riley Shidaker rolls back on a beautiful tousele of blond hair and offers a big smile.

She's a lovely and spirited child but athetoid cerebral palsy from oxygen deprivation and a stroke in utero has left her unable to talk, or to sit up without help.

She has just enough motor skills to push herself around with a walker for short periods and to reach out to her mom.

Her mother, Rachel Mohlman of West Palm Beach, who will soon give birth to her second child, said her pregnancy with Riley was normal until childbirth.

It left the girl with a lifelong condition that includes the seizures, the first of which she suffered when she was eight hours old.

Riley attends the Rehabilitation Center for Children and Adults, a public preschool. Outside of schools, she loves participating in modified versions of surfing, baseball and paddle ball, even cheerleading.

Though her ability to communicate is compromised, her confidence is high and her cognitive abilities appear normal for her age.

She doesn't sense that she's different, Mohlman says. But

## RILEY'S WISH

Riley Shidaker, a 5-year-old West Palm Beach girl with cerebral palsy, has a wish list to help her family with her medical condition: a wheelchair-accessible minivan, gas cards to help with trips to therapy, car insurance, a seizure alert dog, horseback riding therapy, wheelchair arm extension for communication device, toilet and shower medical chair and a twin bed.

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physically she is and that's something her family could use a hand with.

They recently got Riley a motorized wheelchair, which she's learning to operate with head motions, and they hope for a wheelchair-accessible minivan.

They could use gas cards and money for car insurance, and a seizure alert dog, one trained to detect the body chemistry changes that take place just prior to Riley's frequent, life-threatening seizures, so that she can be transported quickly to the hospital.

Mohlman cares for Riley full-time. Riley's father is active in her life but was injured a year ago and is unable to provide for Riley and her medical needs.

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Riley Shidaker, 5, gets strapped into her helmet before equine therapy at Vinceremos Therapeutic Riding Center in Loxahatchee.