

All for one (Hillyard business and community)

Hillyard community leaders aid store owners during difficult time

[Mike Prager](#)

Staff writer

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HILLYARD – When Marvin Peterson's wife, Vicki, was hospitalized a few weeks ago, he nearly closed the Hillyard Variety, a small shop on North Market Street that provides space for various neighborhood vendors.

But leaders in the Hillyard community quickly stepped up and started taking over shifts at the front counter while the Petersons confront a life-threatening condition – Vicki Peterson needs a lung transplant.

The increasingly close-knit Hillyard community is also putting on a benefit fundraiser for Vicki Peterson at 3 p.m. on Sept. 13 at Big Sky's Tavern, 5510 N. Market St.

"It's just a great bunch of people," Marvin Peterson said about his neighbors rallying to support. "I was surprised to see how many people stepped forward when they learned what a plight me and my wife were in."

Vicki Peterson suffered lung damage from anesthesia seven years ago during gastrointestinal surgery. Her lung condition took a turn for the worse in August. Now she is on a priority list for a lung transplant at the University of Washington's medical center in Seattle. The operation is expected to take place in three to four months.

The couple in 2007 had opened Hillyard Variety, 5009 N. Market St., as an outlet for other vendors who wanted to sell items on consignment. Some of the items at the store are being sold to raise money for community causes like the Hillyard rail and fire museum and Clyde Decker's annual efforts to be the Hillyard Santa.

Their store was an outgrowth of the former Market Street Market that for several years operated as a small-business incubator in an old warehouse at the north end of the Hillyard business strip. Marvin Peterson said having a shop has been a longtime dream of his wife's. She would often be seen at the counter while hooked to oxygen.

Mike Fagan, a neighborhood leader, has some of his own items on consignment, including dart and billiard supplies. He was taking a shift at the store last week. He said the Petersons "have got their heart and soul and whole life into this store."

Marvin Peterson credited neighborhood activists like Fagan, Tom Heckler, Desi Bucknell and Dave Griswold for their help.

He said he and his wife live on his small pension and that Vicki Peterson was placed on Social Security disability. As a result, Medicare is paying 80 percent of their medical costs, but they are still obligated to pick up 20 percent.

As a result, he said the couple owes \$130,000 in medical bills so far and the transplant operation is going to cost \$600,000, making the Petersons liable for another \$120,000 in charges. On top of that, her antirejection medication is expected to cost \$2,400 a month, and again they expect to be charged 20 percent for that.

The chance of Vicki Peterson regaining her health with a lung transplant is good, Marvin Peterson said. "Their success rate is 98 percent," and his wife is "perfectly healthy except for her lungs."

It isn't the first time Hillyard residents stepped forward to help people with health-care crises. Earlier this year, the neighborhood raised nearly \$40,000 for Cancer Patient Care in Spokane through benefit fundraisers, and in July, another



Desi Bucknell, left, and friends of Vicki Peterson's family help operate the Hillyard Variety, while Peterson awaits a lung transplant. The Spokesman-Review (BRIAN PLONKA The Spokesman-Review)

If you go

What: An auction and evening of entertainment to benefit Vicki Peterson

When: Sept. 13,

3 p.m.

Where: Big Sky's Tavern

Address: 5510 N. Market St.

event was held for a couple injured in a motorcycle accident.

"Everybody is really coming together up here," Marvin Peterson said.

He said his wife is looking forward to getting back in the store and that she shares his appreciation for the neighborly help.

"She's just overwhelmed by it," he said.