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Creative for a cause

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RESEARCH: Livia Matby, with her mother Kirsti, battles developmental delay, scoliosis.

When Livia Matby was born, her family welcomed a beautiful full-term baby girl after a normal pregnancy.

Not long after, the heartaches began. Doctors diagnosed developmental delay, scoliosis, that meant she could not walk until her fourth birthday, and autism.

At ten weeks she was blind.

Livi will need a metal rod in her back as she grows and she faces more physio, speech and other therapies at aged six than most adults ever need.

She has a few words now, and has gained sight, but the genetic cause for Livi's collection of challenges is still unknown.

It's cases like Livi's that inspired the Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI) to start the fundraiser called 'Jeans for Genes' 20 years ago.

Since its founding in 1958, the CMRI has devoted its energy to uncovering the unknowns that affect countless children whose parents had been told there was no cure and no answers.

Their focus includes cancer research, treatments for epilepsy and liver disease, microsurgery techniques for newborns and the young, finding the roots of birth defects, blindness and genetic diseases.

The Jeans for Genes campaign is their creation and all funds go directly toward supporting the research.

Friday, August 2, is the designated day this year when workplaces might find employees dressed down in denim to support the cause, but one local business has a different spin on the fundraising.

The Inverell Premier Store opened a competition to all ages and talents for the best-painted pair of jeans.

Competition categories include kindy level, all schoolies plus an open class for all ages.

This year store owner David Ferris said a group of residents at McLean now are getting involved.

David explained there are nothing but good reasons for the competition because of the cause and the fact that it does something to encourage artistic endeavours in the community.

It costs five dollars to enter a pair of jeans. Winners and runners-up in all categories all receive prizes.

The winner of the best overall pair gets a \$50 gift voucher for the Premier Store and the option to sell their jeans to the store collection for an additional \$50 voucher.

Every entry fee goes directly to the Jeans for Genes fund.

Entry forms are available at the Premier Store prior to August 2, and the winners and runners-up will be on display in the store windows.