

Garage Sale Gal **THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC**



Garage Sale Gal

Nielson fundraiser ***Lynda Hammond***

They're doing better.

Christian can walk, talk and brush his teeth.

Stephanie seems to be accepting her skin grafts well. "I wish we had a magic wand to make them better but we don't so, we just hope and pray they get well soon," says close friend, Reachel Bagley.

In August, the Mesa couple—along with Christian's flight instructor-- were flying back home from a family ranch in New Mexico. They stopped to refuel in St. Johns, Az.—in the eastern part of the state. All seemed fine. But when they took off for the last leg of their trip the plane crashed as it gained elevation. The instructor died from his injuries. The Nielsons are badly hurt and hospitalized at the Arizona Burn Center-- Christian with a broken back and burns, Stephanie with burns over 80% of her body. "I'm doing okay. It's just a terrible thing to happen to anyone you love. But if anyone is strong enough to overcome this it's Stephanie and Christian," says Reachel who is also Godmother to the Nielson's four young children.

Treatment for the couple is expected to cost millions of dollars so family and friends are holding fundraisers to offset the hospital bills. This weekend they'll hold their first garage sale. "It's just nice to have the opportunity to stay busy and help raise money. Feeling like you can do something to help is important."

The sale is expected to be a big one. It'll include things we always spot at garage sales—furniture, clothes, household items—and things we don't normally see. Organizers say they'll be selling arts and crafts, baked goods and even some of Stephanie's favorite recipes. There are also various other events including silent auctions with donated items, benefit boutiques, a concert, several local businesses are helping to raise money for the cause and the list of people helping the Nielsons through this difficult time continues to grow. There are also fundraisers in Provo, Ut. where Stephanie grew up and where other family members still live.

It seems like thousands of people are lending a hand. This incredible outpouring of help is—in part--thanks to Stephanie's blog on the internet. Since 2005 she's blogged about being a busy mom and wife and she's gained a solid fan base. "Other bloggers have read about her life and her dedication to family and faith. And there's a lot of strength and relationships being built through the internet and it's helped our cause."

Nielson garage sale fundraiser

What: A huge garage sale in Gilbert will help to raise money for a Mesa couple injured in a plane crash.

Where: Gilbert, Agritopia Community Center-Agritopia Loop Rd. Gilbert, 85296-Off Higley Rd south of the Loop

When: Tomorrow, Saturday September 27, 2008, 7 am—1pm

Blog: Visit nierecovery.com to check out other events or donate to the Nielson family.



(Suggested caption for picture: PHOTO provided by Reachal Bagley): A garage sale fundraiser will be held tomorrow to help raise money for Stephanie and Christian Nielson who are recovering in the Arizona Burn Center at the Maricopa Medical Center following a plane crash. The Mesa couple's four children are in Utah staying with relatives.

MY FAVORITE FIND

Do you have a garage sale find you love? Something that makes you smile when you look at it? Share it with us. Send us your picture. Include your name, email address and phone number and email it to: Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com. Watch for the story of your treasure in this column!

Lynda Hammond is a former television anchor who left broadcasting for the love of garage sales. Contact her at Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com. Lynda also does garage sale segments on 3-TV's Good Morning Arizona.

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