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http://www.ozaukeepress.com/images/012413/ellenSM.png**Fredonia native and family win $19,000 prize after writing to popular TV host**

A surprise phone call landed a Fredonia native on national television and led to her family winning $19,000 on the “Ellen DeGeneres Show.”

“It’s so surreal. I can’t believe it really happened. Stuff like this doesn’t happen to people we know and it definitely doesn’t happen to us,” said Brittany Demaske, 27, of their show appearance that aired on Jan. 9.

Demaske, who graduated from Ozaukee High School in 2003, lives in Chesterland, Ohio, with her husband Jason, 37, and their three children.

Demaske’s father John Donald lives in Fredonia.

Mrs. Demaske wrote in to the show last year and was shocked when she got a phone call from the host, she said.

“I couldn’t hear what she said after I found out it was Ellen because my kids were screaming in the background, so she had to tell me twice to go to the front door. Then I heard a knock at the front door and all of a sudden there was Kevin Nealon and a camera crew standing there,” Mrs. Demaske said.

Nealon co-hosted a game with the Demaskes called Cash At Your Door, in which the family had to answer a variety of trivia questions. For each correct answer, the Demaskes won $1,000.

Nine questions and $9,000 later, the family got the biggest surprise — a briefcase awarding them with $10,000.

“I was completely shocked as to what was going on,” said Mr. Demaske, who works in the claims department for an RV extended warranty firm.

Mrs. Demaske is currently going to college for her nursing degree and is a stay-at-home mother to their children — Madison, 3, Morgan, 2, and Maddox, 7 months.

Mrs. Demaske, who wrote in for a segment about why they needed home repairs, said she is humbled that her words made an impression on the celebrity host.

“Maybe something I said touched Ellen or somebody there to bring it to her attention out of all of the millions of people who write in. To have it be our time feels overwhelming that our life story spoke to someone so they could help us,” Mrs. Demaske said.

“We feel that we kind of caught a little bit of a break,” Mr. Demaske said. “We know that we work hard and we know that we’re not the most unfortunate people out there, but we’re certainly not the most fortunate and it’s nice to get a little bit of breathing room.”

The Demaskes agree that the money is a blessing for their family as they work to pay off school loans, medical bills and a mortgage.

The excitement from being on the show can’t top the feeling of security they’ve received from the grand prize, Mr. Demaske said.

“The first few days were crazy and now we’re kind of settling in. I think once the check shows up in the mail, it will really hit home,” he said.

Image Information: SHOWING THEIR GRAND PRIZE, Fredonia native Brittany Demaske (center) and her family won a total of $19,000 on the “Ellen DeGeneres Show.” Pictured (from left) are 3-year-old Madison; actor Kevin Nealon, who surprised the family on the Jan. 9 show; Demaske, holding 2-year-old Morgan; and husband Jason, holding 7-month-old Maddox.