

MARY JO BROWN FOUNDATION

- Spreading Smiles Through Acts of Kindness -



Newsletter Fall 2014

www.maryjobrown.org

ALOHA EVERYONE! Before you eat all that Halloween candy and set those clocks back to catch an extra hour of sleep, we want to fill you in on what has been happening since our last publication.

MAY—As planned, on Mother’s Day, we announced our Kindness Campaign. We sought nominations of children under 18 who had acted selflessly to help others, thus embracing our mantra of “spreading smiles through acts of kindness”. The deadline for submission was September 1 and this was our method of choosing a winner of our second annual trip for 4 to Disney World, Florida. More about that will appear later in this newsletter.

We also started a monthly program with Herobox where we provide a package of goods/necessities for two individuals serving in the military.

JUNE— We received our first ever donation that was made in memory of someone. Al Marrero, retired U.S. Army and longtime Tufts Medical Center employee passed away suddenly. In his honor his co-workers took up a collection and chose our foundation as recipient. Rather than deposit into our general account, we felt that this special donation deserved special treatment. We combined Al’s pride in service to his country, Mary Jo’s love for the 4th of July and our respect for those who serve to keep us free, and chose an Army platoon serving in the Middle East from the Herobox web site. (this is in addition to the

two individual service men/women that we sponsor every month). Christina contacted the troop leader and she provided us with a list of needs/wants of her group, a logistics division. Headlamps, work gloves, duct tape, foot powder, snacks and anything else that Sharon could fit into three huge boxes (including July 4th decorations!) was sent from the Melrose Post Office (with a lot of help from postal worker, Angelo!!)

JULY---Things went as planned and our military group received their boxes in time for the 4th. As pictured below, everything arrived intact. Now we just have to pray for these soldiers to come home safe and sound.



AUGUST-- Christina was busy sending out letters requesting donations for our 3rd annual luau on October 19. Responses were much quicker than in the past two years, and, while we kept a core group of donors who were with us from the first year, we lost some donors and gained some really great new ones!

SEPTEMBER— The first of the month brought the close for nominations for the Kindness Campaign as well as some changes in our board. Marcy took over the treasurer duties and Sharon moved to an advisory position.

Collecting items for the silent auction at the luau continued as well as finalizing other plans. In addition to foundation activities, those members who participate in the Country Heals Walk (formerly known as the Tufts Harborwalk) were busy preparing for that and seeking donations.

OCTOBER— On the 19th we began our 3rd year with our fundraiser at the Saugus Elks hall. Some things remained the same—the site, the theme, the menu, and the INCOMPARABLE Ms. Denise LaCarrubba –DJ Deja—who, even though it was less than a week before her wedding, provided us with her invaluable service and support.

Some things were different—Christina did an outstanding job printing up descriptions of all the silent auction items, displayed in acrylic frames so that people could easily make their selections. We also improved upon our check out process so that people could make their purchases with no backup!!

For a complete listing of the individuals and business who generously donated to our event please click on the links to our website or Facebook page noted at the end of this newsletter.

Highlight of the afternoon was the awards presentation to the winners of our Kindness Campaign. Christina and Sharon shared the emcee duties.

After opening remarks, greeting supporters and recognizing the many individuals who helped us with donations and setup, Christina recognized DJ Cora with a Kindness Campaign trophy for his volunteer work during our first two fundraisers. Each year he and his mom Sharon (Mary Jo's cousin) set up and served the buffet, cleaned up and did whatever was asked of them. DJ was unable to attend this

year because his baseball team was in the playoffs. His Aunt Michelle and Uncle Bob accepted the trophy on his behalf.

Sharon then spoke, first to the parents of our three award winners. Brian Sparkhawk of Wakefield, Bill and Jessica Walsh of Carver, and Bill and Danielle Gregoire of Haverhill. These parents have raised three amazing daughters who have great heart, values, bravery and kindness. And we thank them for that.

Our first award winner was 6 year old Teagan Keon Sparhawk of Wakefield who was recognized for standing up for a kindergarten classmate who was being bullied. She was also honored for her work in fostering dogs with her dad, Brian, getting them ready for adoption. In addition to her trophy, "T" was presented with passes for Sky Zone in Boston and a basket of treats and toys for the dogs in her care. WAY TO GO, T!!

Christina then introduced award recipient 7 year old Riley Walsh of Carver, a 2nd grade student at Carver Elementary School. Her nomination was submitted by schoolteacher Bridgett Driscoll of Dedham, a coworker of Riley's grandmother, Sue Doherty. Riley had seen an ad on TV about St Jude Hospital for Children. Upset that so many kids her age were ill, she wanted to do something for them. Being an avid reader, she decided to start collecting books. And did she ever!! Riley collected over 2000 books from family, friends and anyone who would donate. She and her mom, Jessica, delivered them to Camp Sunshine in Maine—a camp for children with life-threatening illnesses. Riley received her trophy and a \$250 Amazon gift card. In addition, a donation in her name will be made by the foundation to Camp Sunshine.

Sharon then had the honor of introducing 9 year old Noelle Gregoire of Haverhill, a 4th grade student at Silver Hill Horace Mann Charter School. Nominated by Mike Foley, Director of Radiology at Tufts, Noelle overcame great physical challenge and truly "paid it forward". Diagnosed with a severe spine abnormality at age 5, Noelle spent the next 3 years in a hard body cast, unable to partake in any ordinary childhood activities. She spent many hours in the pediatric radiology and MRI departments at Tufts, where her spirits would be lifted by being able to choose a prize or toy from the toy chest in each department. When she was "freed" from her cast in October 2013, she began swimming, both as exercise and

to strengthen her back. With help from her mom, she began “Laps 4 Backs” and raised money via GoFundMe by swimming laps across a 1 ½ mile lake at her grandparents N.H. summer home. She was very successful in her fundraising efforts. In August, she arrived with family members at the front door of the Floating Hospital with \$4000 worth of toys to be distributed in the pediatric radiology and MRI departments, so that other children would have their spirits lifted as she had. And so the winner of our Disney Trip for 4 is Noelle Gregoire!!

But as they say on the game shows—WAIT, THERE’S MORE!!! The foundation board members were feeling elated that they could have their three award winners present so that our supporters could share in the joy!! (But we were also feeling a little bad that our trip was for 4 and the Gregoire family has 5 members)

To end our day, we began pulling the winning numbers for our 50/50 raffle. There were many additional prizes awarded before the final winner of ½ the pot of gold. Christina and Denise had Noelle come up to draw the winning ticket.

And the winner?? HER DAD, BILL!! What are the odds of THAT?? Obviously, Mary Jo is still pulling strings to make sure that things go right.

It is too soon to come up with a final tally as we are still receiving (and gratefully accepting) donations. But we are past the \$10000 mark and well on our way to matching past years proceeds. This puts us in good shape to continue our mission and maintain those initiatives that are in place.

Our annual board meeting will be on November 2nd at Sharon’s house and we will be making our plans for the upcoming year.

Watch for our next newsletter in early 2015 with coverage of our Christmas shopping, wrapping and delivery for the two families we will be adopting for the upcoming holiday season.

Thank you all for your support—your acts of kindness—your well wishes.

~~~~May all your dreams come true~~~~





Back row: Board members Kara Waldron, Sharon Bosse Macone, Christina Brown and Marcy Capone Young

Front row: Noelle Gregoire, Teagan Keon Sparhawk and Riley Walsh

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