



Marcel Ohayon
Jim Craigmyle photograph

Hospital and community benefit from Project Give Back

by Lee Ann Waterman

When Marcel Ohayon was four, his mother slipped on some ice and broke her leg. Vivian Ohayon lay on the ground, with young Marcel in the car beside her, until a passerby saw her and called an ambulance. The injury required surgery to insert plates and pins in her leg—which was done at Mackenzie Richmond Hill Hospital.

Marcel, now 10, remembered this event when his Grade 4 class at Kamin Education Centre, a Hebrew school in Thornhill, began Project Give Back.

The program, explains Ellen Schwartz, a teacher and founder of Project Give Back, has students choose a cause that is meaningful to them and their family and, over several months, research that cause and share what they've learned with their classmates.

Marcel chose Mackenzie Health Foundation. He told his classmates about his mom's experience, the plans to build a new hospital in Vaughan and events that have raised money for equipment such as a new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine.

"Thanks to all the fundraising events, Mackenzie Health will help save lives in our community," he said.

Teachers and parents have reported that students become more empathetic and compassionate towards their classmates

through initiatives such as Project Give Back, Ms. Schwartz says. They also instill a desire to give to those in need.

"I wanted to inspire children to see the impact they can have on the world around them," she says.

"It was a very good learning experience for Marcel," Mrs. Ohayon says. "He's aware of things that are going on at the hospital and in the community and he knows how important it is to donate."

Marcel, she says, always wants to get involved when his school supports causes such as the Terry Fox Run or food drives and has a general awareness about the responsibility of all of us to help organizations that help others.

"Some people say what comes around goes around," Marcel says. "I'm trying to help others but maybe someday something will happen to me and somebody will help me."

An article he read in last fall's *HealthTime* about a grassroots campaign by a

local mother, Heather Hamilton, to fund the renovation of a children's room at Mackenzie Health in memory of her son Zack really stuck with Marcel.

"That was pretty touching," he says. "If I knew about it earlier, I would have tried to give to her and help her raise money (in memory of) her son."

That fundraiser showed him that if everyone gives a little, big things can happen, he says.

Dear Mackenzie Health
Hi my name is Marcel. I go to A.H.S
Kamin, and I'm in grade 4.
I did a program called Project Give
Back. I was asked to pick a charity,
and I chose yours. I chose your
charity because MY MOM broke her
leg and you helped her. For MY activity
I wrote a speech and made a
display and a game. I hope this
helps and are pictures of MY lesson.
Thank you for helping MY MOM.
Best regards

Marcel O.
A Project Give Back Student