



A Foundation Dedicated to the Care, Comfort and Cure of Children with Brain and Spinal Cord Tumors.

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Making Headway is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit foundation.

Top: Amina Koueider proudly displaying her playroom craft project.

Bottom: Jonah Shainberg with Edward Manley.

Succeeding in Difficult Times

A Message from Edward Manley, President

Wow! What a year!

Admittedly, it's been tough at times. The current economic climate has affected charities everywhere, and Making Headway is no exception. Yet while some fundraising events brought in less than in past years, others raised as much or even more than they have in the past. And though we have been careful to ensure our spending is in keeping with the kind of belt-tightening going on everywhere, we still have a number of accomplishments to boast of:



- *Last March, Making Headway Foundation was inducted into the Harold Acton Society of New York University, which recognizes individuals and organizations that have contributed over \$1 million to the university.*
- *Through funds donated to Making Headway in memory of Benji Kuelling, we were able to offer a \$13,000 grant for new I.V. poles and portable pumps for the children receiving treatment at Hassenfeld. The poles make it easier for them to move around the floor. The pumps are for parents to take home when chemotherapy drugs must be administered continuously over a longer period of time.*
- *We expanded the massage services we offer out-patients and their families at the Hassenfeld Children's Center to serve children and their families on the in-patient pediatric floor at the NYU Langone Medical Center.*
- *Members of our Ongoing Care Team, Susan Leslie and Marcia Greenleaf, launched new support groups for Connecticut parents.*
- *On the research side, we've been able to focus our efforts this year on clinical trials, testing new and improved treatments for children with brain and spinal cord tumors. At the Hassenfeld Children's Center, we provided \$43,600 toward the salary of the Clinical Trials Manager, whose job it is to manage all clinical trials under the supervision of Dr. Jeffrey Allen.*

As always, we greatly appreciate your continued confidence in our work and your understanding of the need to provide support for children and their families experiencing a life-threatening illness. The generous contributions we receive from our donors and the funds that our special events generate for Making Headway enable us to carry on with our programs, even in a time of economic uncertainty.





Gracious Giving

Throughout the year, Making Headway receives numerous gifts from individuals, families and friends, organizations and companies. These gifts help us fulfill our mission. No matter how great or small, we are honored by each contribution and sincerely thank you. Some examples of gracious giving include the following:

Birthday and other presents took on new meaning for people of all ages who recently re-routed gifts heading their way to Making Headway. **Owen Dodd's** parents, **Edward and Dina**, delivered a pile of new playthings to the Hassenfeld Children's Center as well as \$470 to Making Headway—all donated in honor of Owen's fourth birthday. **Georgie and Brynn D'Avanzo's** request for donations in lieu of gifts for their ninth birthday brought in an amazing \$1,390. Eighteen-year-old **Jerry Betancourt** asked his aunt and uncle to leave his \$25 birthday check blank, so he could make it out to Making Headway. **Jake Cappello** collected \$300 in lieu of tenth birthday gifts, requesting that it be used specifically for new toys and video games for the Hassenfeld playroom. And **Matt Davis's** grandmother, **Rosemary Rorke**, raised \$600 by asking fellow employees at South Nassau Communities Hospital for a donation in place of a retirement gift.

Schools everywhere have been teaching generosity side-by-side with geometry:

- At the suggestion of **Chris Conetta**, \$379.65 raised through a weekly homeroom collection at his school, Fairfield College Preparatory, has been donated to Making Headway.
- The **Natural Helpers** of Hauppauge High School held a male beauty pageant, raising \$250 in memory of their fellow student, **Courtney Tomkin**.
- The **Helping Hands of P.S. 209** in Brooklyn collected their pennies to a combined tune of \$750 in their annual Penny Harvest campaign, then donated the sum to Making Headway.
- Fifth graders at **Cedar Hill Elementary School** held a Read-a-Thon, expanding their minds while raising \$4,416 in memory of fellow student, **Sara Chaikin**.
- **Alexandra Talbot's** nursery school at the Richard C. Rosenthal Jewish Community Center in Pleasantville, New York, collected money throughout the year for tzedakah, the Jewish requirement of charity. The school donated \$365 of what it raised to Making Headway.
- **Lily Taubin's** nursery school at the Jewish Community Center of Harrison donated \$400, which will be used to buy new arts and crafts supplies for the Hassenfeld playroom.

Gracious Giving (continued)

- **Noelle Sollivan** made gray ribbons and organized a "Grey Day," for brain tumor awareness week at her school, Saints Mary and Elizabeth Academy. Students bought ribbons and traded an additional donation for permission to exchange their uniforms for civvies. The efforts brought in \$530, which will be used to purchase photography equipment for the ninth floor Child Life Office at NYU Medical Center, as requested by Noelle's family.
- When **Peter Barbieri** graduated from middle school at Parsons Memorial School, the graduation gift came to Making Headway. The school presented Edward Manley with a check for \$4,500, raised through a variety of fundraising activities and contributions from Peter's family.

Krystle Narine raised \$40 for Making Headway by selling her handpainted miniatures of horses as refrigerator magnets. Six-year-old **Rachael Kessler** also brought in \$40 with an act of classic generosity: she emptied her piggybank. Thirteen-year-old **Brendan Giles** donated a large box of DVDs, CDs, games and books to the Hassenfeld Playroom in memory of his sister, **Caroline**. He bought the gifts using earnings from various business ventures including yard work, babysitting and a lemonade stand—as well as fundraising among his friends. And **Jeanne Egan** arranged for the Plainview, New York, Reformed Church Project Linus Group to donate beautiful handmade blankets for children undergoing treatment at Hassenfeld.



Noelle Sollivan.



Josh Cappello, brother of Jake.

Stephanie Mejia Wins the 2009 Scott J. Reisser Memorial Scholarship

We're delighted to announce that the 2009 Scott J. Reisser Memorial Scholarship has gone to Hunter College freshman, Stephanie Mejia. Stephanie graduated from New York City's High School for Health Professions and Human Services last spring and plans to study nursing.

Stephanie was diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2003 and over the last few years suffered three strokes before being pronounced cancer-free last February. She has had to undergo numerous surgeries and therapies, including physical, occupational and speech therapy. Nonetheless, and despite some physical disability resulting from her illness, she managed to volunteer at Beth Israel Hospital for three years.

Last fall Stephanie told her principal, "I am determined to limp my way across the stage on graduation day to receive my diploma." Her determination clearly paid off; now she is well on her way to achieving her dream of "sharing and helping others live their lives to the fullest extent." Congratulations, Stephanie!



Stephanie Mejia.



Bangles & Beads

On February 27, hundreds of festive partygoers gathered at the Cortlandt Manor in Westchester for the third annual **Mardi Gras Bash**. Hosted by Lisa and Tom Fitzgerald, the crowd danced and feasted, raising funds for the Thomas D. Fitzgerald III Memorial Fund and benefiting Making Headway to the tune of \$3,000. 🌸

Going the Distance

Some sprinted, some strolled, some even scootered—but everyone enjoyed the fresh air on April 4, a beautiful spring day in Point Lookout, New York. It was the eleventh annual **Little Bit of a Walk and Fun Run**. About 200 children and adults of all ages participated in the event, organized by Diane and Pat Ryan in memory of their daughter, Elizabeth. Following the main event, participants returned to the starting line to snack on fresh fruit and bid on the stuff of their dreams in a silent auction—altogether raising \$23,900 for Making Headway. 🌸

Enchanted Evening

Forty thousand tulips were in full, breathtaking bloom on April 30, when a couple hundred people made their way through the grounds of the Swan Club for a night of dinner and dancing. The occasion was the twelfth annual **“All-is-onE” Tulip Festival Dinner Dance**, hosted by Jeanie and Greg Trunz. This year’s event journal was dedicated to the memory of Courtney Tomkin, a young woman who had lived in the couple’s community. Proceeds from the event, including silent and “Get Lucky” auctions, came to \$92,000. 🌸

Paula Santiago and Lily Langbein.



Three Holes-in-One

Tiger Woods might be more consistently under-par, but when it comes to heart he’s got nothing on the sportsmen—and women—who showed up at the greens for several recent fundraising events:

- June 12th was the date for the sixth annual **Nicky Docu Memorial Golf Outing** at the Van Cortlandt Park Golf Course in the Bronx. Christine and Tom Docu organized the event in memory of their son, Nicky. Ninety golfers, eighteen holes and one delicious barbeque added up to \$21,350 for Making Headway. 🌸
- Close to 75 players hit the fairway at Long Island’s Crab Meadow Golf Club on June 22 for the fifth annual **Kyle A. McKay Golf Classic**. The golfers enjoyed a barbeque lunch and later were joined for cocktails, dinner and a silent auction by another seventeen guests. The event, organized by Lauren and Don McKay in honor of their son Kyle, brought in more than \$25,000 for Making Headway.
- Finally, the Westlake Golf and Country Club in Jackson, New Jersey, was the site of the eighth annual **Fore A Difference Golf Tournament** on July 27. Participants at this event not only golfed but enjoyed dinner and comedy, raising a total of \$57,920. The event was hosted by Tracey and Stephen Casale with their friends, Ralph Arbia and his daughter, Kim Madsen. 🌸

Grand Slam

When 17-year-old survivor Chris Conetta found out he was too young to volunteer at Hassenfeld Children’s Center, he had another idea. With the help of his parents, Peter and Lynn, his brother and sister and some family friends, he organized **Swing for a Cause**, a Round Robin whiffleball tournament. Eight small teams competed and, along with some enthusiastic spectators, enjoyed hamburgers, hot dogs and other treats. The event, held on September 12, brought in over \$6,000. 🌸



Above: Nurse Eileen Gillespie with Shruti Srinivasan.

Below: Kevin, Chris, Peter, Lynn and Kate Conetta.



Above: Winning team at the Swing for a Cause fundraiser.

Healing Hands

by *Gunilla Asp, Massage Therapist and Reiki Master, Making Headway Hospital Care Team*



Ever since I was a young child fighting my own battle against serious illness, I have dreamed of one day having the opportunity to comfort and care for those who are ill. Because Making Headway's Maya Manley believed in me, I now have that opportunity at the Hassenfeld Children's Center and "Nine East," the in-patient pediatric floor.

Before coming to Hassenfeld, I worked for ten years as a lay chaplain at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. I became a massage therapist in 1986 and later a Reiki master and hypnotherapist. Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction and relaxation that also promotes healing. In recent years, both it and massage therapy have been embraced as a way to complement medical treatment in many hospitals. They've been shown to support healing in numerous ways, from reducing pain and stress to speeding recovery.

My experience of serious illness as a child allows me to identify deeply with the children and families I meet at Hassenfeld; my training allows me to help them. For example, a woman who had just received bad news about her seven-year-old daughter's health came to me for a massage. Like many people, she seemed to think the brave thing to do was not to cry, but she told me she felt life was too much for her. I had her lie on the massage table, where she closed her eyes, surrounded by the sounds of running water from my CD-player and the fragrance of lavender. Asking her to breathe deeply, I simply held her hand. Her tears came and for one hour I sat holding her hand and wiping her cheeks in silence, just being there for her.

A couple sat in the waiting room with their young daughter. The parents were exhausted, asleep sitting up. I gently approached the wife, inviting her to come with me to lie down and rest. She resisted, but encouraged her husband to go. He smiled when he saw the stars lighting up the ceiling of my office and lay down with obvious relief. Reiki took him into a seemingly transcendent state of mind and he fell quickly into a deep sleep. When he awoke an hour later, he told me that the headache he'd had for years was gone.

An eleven-year-old child whose brain tumor had been surgically removed five years ago was receiving chemotherapy and asked to see me. I followed her guidance in placing my heated pillow on her back for comfort while gently massaging her abdomen with peppermint lotion, which is healing for the inner organs. A sixteen-year-old arrived for chemotherapy exhausted; heavy medication had been keeping her awake at night. She requested Reiki, fell immediately into a deep sleep and woke more than an hour later, rested and ready to begin her chemotherapy.

Vaclav Havel said, "Hope is a dimension of the soul, an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart...It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out." In my work at Hassenfeld and Nine East, I try to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness and the truth of the work, itself. 🌿

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This newsletter is dedicated to our donors and supporters, whom we celebrate every day.

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Below: Dr. Jeffrey Allen with Erin Bentivegna.

