

SUBURBANITE

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Teenager develops Chores for Charity

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Chores for Charity is a fundraising concept any young person with a big heart and a small wallet can follow independently.

It offers a way to earn money and community service credits, for epilepsy research, for example.

The program was the brainchild of Ilana Rothbein of Tenafly. Rothbein, currently a freshman at Syracuse University, is majoring in retail management and consumer studies.

About two years ago she came up with the concept - Chores for Charity - when she was a 16-year-old babysitter attending Man-

asquan High School at the Jersey Shore. She decided to donate her babysitting money to the N.Y.U. Medical Center for its research on epilepsy.

Her brother has epilepsy and so she grew up with a profound understanding of how this disease affected her brother and her family. Her brother endured cruel

taunting and teasing from other children.

From a very early age she also felt a strong commitment to contribute to finding a cure.

"At the time I received a letter from the New York University Medical Center thanking me for \$450 which I gave in a single year," said Rothbein. "This is what made me think that if one person like myself could give \$450, what would happen if everyone contributed?"

"That is how Chores for Charity began. Everyone needs an incentive, it could be community service credits for doing household chores," said Rothbein. It is a concept and Rothbein would like to see more people use it to contribute to epilepsy research. Rothbein works with the Anita Kaufman Foundation based in New Milford. While the Foundation focuses on promoting greater awareness of how this disease affects 3 million persons, Rothbein promotes how the Chores-for-Charity program can help a high school student earn community service credits and also contribute to epilepsy research.

One of the positive attributes of Chores for Charity, she pointed out, is that any young person can raise funds and they can do it working at their own pace. "It is something a person can do even if they only have 30 minutes a week. It doesn't have to be a team effort. It can be done quietly at home."

Rothbein said, "This also has a very real world concept in that adults get a tax break for when they donate and kids can get credit for community service. Many high schools require students to perform community service activities as a graduation requirement."

Whenever Rothbein has an opportunity during college breaks, she likes to talk about Chores for Charity at high school assemblies.

When she is not available her mother, Sylvia Rothbein substitutes.

Usually Rothbein is part of the Anita Kaufman Foundation's program presentation to high school students. According to Deborah Josephs, executive director, the foundation is committed to providing epilepsy education to every high school student in New Jersey. "Working with Ilana, we have a kind of learn and give approach," said Josephs. "The students learn about epilepsy and then about Chores for Charity."

Rothbein promotes Chores for Charity but more importantly, she talks about epilepsy as she aims for greater public understanding and awareness about epilepsy.

Most people don't know much about epilepsy, she said. "They don't recognize that there are many different types of seizures.

"For example, a person who has epilepsy may stare into space or look drunk. In other cases an epileptic person may make repetitive movements. There could be some shame or horror associated with epilepsy. Kids really don't understand it."

To help anyone interested in using the Chores for Charity program Rothbein set up a Web site www.choresforcharity.com. In 2005 Rothbein was a nominee for the President's Volunteer Award, an honor which included an invitation to a Washington, D.C. luncheon.

According to Rothbein, Tony Coelho, the former California congressman, primary author and sponsor of the 15-year-old Americans with Disabilities Act, loves the concept of Chores for Charity. He is the current chairperson of the Epilepsy Foundation Board in Arlington, Va. Chores was also recognized for the Prudential Spirit of Community Award.

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