

Birthday Club Turns Parties Into Food Drives for Island Pantry

By BRITTANY LYTE

Sara Hohenthal celebrated the advent of her fourth year of life in typical birthday fashion: after collecting gifts from her family, a squad of smiling playmates treated her with birthday caroling, cake and more bow-wrapped presents — some purchased hesitantly by budget-pressed parents.

On each birthday since her fourth, nine-year-old Sara has celebrated a bit differently. For her special day, relatives still surprise her with presents packaged in colorful boxes and bags, but her friends now arrive at her parties bearing canned corn and vegetable soup.

Sara is a member of The Birthday Club, a program her mother, Kate Darcy Hohenthal, developed to encourage people nationwide to propel their birthday celebrations into non-perishable food drives for local pantries.

"The Birthday Club is a free program for adults and children to use their birthdays to help other people," says Ms. Hohenthal of Manchester, Conn. "It's based on the idea that we couldn't have [Sara] getting 15 or 20 more presents on top of gifts from family. Also, a lot of kids get invited to a lot of parties, but they can't afford to spend \$10 or \$15 on a gift for every party."

"There is so much need. So we thought, maybe there is a way to redirect the gifts."

Ms. Hohenthal launched The Birthday Club to a group of about 30 adults and children, with the unveiling of the program Web site, thebirthdayclub.net, and a half-sheet cake iced with pale yellow and blue balloons and flower blossoms at the West Tisbury Library on Saturday.

The Web site includes a listing of pantries, party invitation and thank-you note designs, and sample party and collection themes for adult, child and pet birthdays, including Italian dinner, dessert and pet food.

"My son Matthew just had his eighth birthday in June and he received 17 brown shopping bags of groceries," Kate says. "Based on the average amount of groceries that families consume, four families had groceries for one week."

Matthew included this statistic in the text of his thank-you cards sent to friends who contributed to the collection. Matthew says he is not disappointed when his playmates arrive at his birthday parties without wrapped toys and games because his family provides him with a sufficient number of gifts.

"We get presents, but we don't get so many that we don't have time to play with them all," explains petite, strawberry-blond Sara.

The Birthday Club encourages people to regard their birthdays as opportunities to give to people in need, but not necessarily as an alternative to traditional celebratory gift giving. Sara and Matthew request that their party guests offer their food pantry donations instead of birthday gifts, but Ms. Hohenthal stresses that people can participate in The Birthday Club and still receive gifts, by asking their guests for non-perishable foods in

addition to presents. "For us, we want [our children] to focus on the relationships and the fun times [with their friends] on birthdays," Kate says. "But there are many ways to do this. Children can still enjoy birthday gifts from friends [while benefitting from] collecting for the pantry."

Ms. Hohenthal has been advocating food drive birthdays by word-of-mouth for seven years. In 2006, she began tracking the impact of her scheme in Manchester by requesting pantry donors to indicate when they had collected food through The Birthday Club.

"I'm a doctoral student, so I like data," she said. "That's why I didn't just go with it. Once I found out that it was successful, we really started to really promote it."

The Birthday Club membership is not constrained by geographical boundaries. Anyone with access to a food pantry may participate.

Ms. Hohenthal chose to launch the program on the Vineyard, the destination of her family's yearly weeklong summer vacations, because the Island Food Pantry is excitedly supportive of the idea.

"When I read the newspaper here, I see the outreach," she explains. "There's a community here on the Island that is really active. It's the people helping the people. There's a level of engagement in a very confined area that makes the Vineyard sort of an ideal place to launch The Birthday Club."

Since the Vineyard in summer is a hub for vacationers — she and her children spotted license plates from 37 states on their annual visit this summer — the Island also appealed as a launch location to Ms. Hohenthal because she hopes out-of-towners will bring the concept home with them and help the program blossom.

Coordinator of the Island Food Pantry Armen Hanjian says that job cuts on the Vineyard have boosted the number of Islanders in need. The staff stocks the pantry shelves with food purchased with government funds more than food donations, a reality that Mr. Hanjian would like to see changed. The staff, he says, is always happy to accept nutritious and unexpired non-perishable food donations.

"It's not just a matter of people having enough food, it's having good food," he says. "If you don't have good food, then you don't have good health."

Mr. Hanjian has seen about a handful of Islanders unknowingly participate in The Birthday Club over the last few years. They are mostly adults and seniors, he says, who choose to celebrate their birthdays charitably by collecting food donations instead of gifts.

"Some people just need to be made aware of the possibility," Mr. Hanjian says. "Everyone knows kids who have more toys than they can use. When they forsake the toys to do something they think might be helping someone, there's more joy in that."



COOPER SHAKES OFF AFTER A SWIM AT MILL POND.

Jaxon White

Pushing the Pedals for Cancer Research

By BRITTANY LYTE

Vineyard Pedicab entrepreneurs Will and John Pasquina will host the first Pan-Martha Challenge, a 40-mile bikeathon across the Vineyard to raise money for cancer research and treatment at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute, on Oct. 4 at 9:30 a.m.

Participants are asked to gather donations before pedaling from the Flying Horses Carousel in Oak Bluffs to the cliffs of Aquinnah, a route one-fifth the length of the statewide charity event it mimics, the Pan-Mass Challenge.

The Pan-Martha Challenge is a charity ride across Massachusetts that supports the Jimmy Fund at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. The event raises millions of dollars annually.

"This is a way for people to get together and hopefully raise a lot of money for this cause," said event coordinator and Vineyard Pedicab co-owner Will Pasquina. "It's the Pan-Martha Challenge because we want it to be a fundraiser with local color."

Mr. Pasquina hopes the event will raise \$5,000 for Dana Farber and urges participants to reach toward \$500 as an individual fundraising goal.

With the ride still one month away, Will has already collected \$100 in donations the old-fashioned way: by letter writing and phone calls to family, neighbors and friends.

Charitableness is the cornerstone of Vineyard Pedicab, the second branch of a community-based company founded in the seaside town of Newburyport by two entrepreneurs who decided to expand their Big Brothers and Big Sisters mentorship into a business partnership.

Since Newburyport Pedicab was established in 2007, founder Kevin Murphy, who lost both parents to cancer, has donated every dollar the company has earned to the Pan-Mass Challenge, an event he participates in and the bikeathon that inspired his business design.

Last summer, Will pedaled for Newburyport Pedicab. Mr. Murphy encouraged him to start an Oak Bluffs offshoot of the company as the creative half of a partnership with his

business-minded brother. "Kevin came out [to the Vineyard] a few years ago and he said, 'You guys have to expand out here. It's perfect. Someone is going to snatch up the whole market,'" Will said. "And we figured it might as well be us."

Inspired by Mr. Murphy's altruistic enterprise and motivated by their mother's cancer diagnosis, the Pasquina brothers expanded the business in May after purchasing four of their own shiny yellow rickshaws for a branch on the Vineyard. Staffed with 14 peddlers, the not-for-profit company offers a green and cost-free transportation option to pedestrians in Oak Bluffs from May through October.

"If you look around the streets of Oak Bluffs, you can see pedicabs just being here," Will said. "Once we started [Vineyard Pedicabs], we had a bunch of guys come up to us and tell us that they had had the same idea and wish they had done it."

To register for the Pan-Martha Challenge, call Will Pasquina at 978-270-0652. Donations can be sent to: Pan Mass Challenge, P.O. Box 1938, Oak Bluffs, MA 02557.

Cycle Martha's Vineyard

Cycle Martha's Vineyard is a scenic recreational island ride on Saturday, Oct. 17. Both the 100-kilometer and the makes a circuit of the Island, traveling along the Atlantic Ocean, Nantucket Sound, rolling farmland and the State Forest. The 50-kilometer route also offers breathtaking views. The event benefits Big Brothers Big Sisters of Martha's Vineyard and other charities.

The registration fee is \$90 before Sept. 7; \$100 Sept. 8 to Oct. 16; or \$125 the day of the ride. Registration entitles a rider to assistance along the course, T-shirt and post-ride barbecue.

The ride starts and ends at the high school in Oak Bluffs. For details, see cyclemarthasvineyard.org.

Island Golfer Leaves U.S. Amateur Open

By JIM HICKEY

After qualifying for a berth in the U.S. Amateur Open, a tournament that has been won by the likes of Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus, Island golfer Tony Grillo shot a disappointing 81 in the second round of match play last week, leaving him cut out of the following rounds of competition.

Grillo, 19, shot a two-day total of 158 — 18 over par — at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa, Okla.

He shot a respectable 77 in the first round last Monday at Southern Hills, but 81 the next day when play shifted to the course at Cedar Ridge Country Club, considered by many to be the easier of the two courses.

"They said Cedar Ridge was the easier course, but I got off to a bad start on Tuesday... a few bogies here and there. So after six or seven holes I had to be aggressive, I was playing from behind the whole round," he said.

The U.S. Amateur will likely be the last tournament of the year for Grillo, who is now back at Harvard University where he will play on the golf team this fall. Although the final result was a letdown, he said playing in the tournament was rewarding.

"Some of the best players in the country were there; for some this was the last tournament as amateurs before they turned professional. It was great just to be out there playing with them," he said.

In the U.S. Amateur, there is no age limit; players of all ages can compete so long as they retain their amateur status. So after two rounds the tournament leader was 50-year-old Tim Jackson, who shot a second-round 72 to earn medalist's honor for match play.

"It was kind of strange; he was playing on the senior tour earlier this year as an amateur," Grillo said.

But in the end youth prevailed over experience as 17-year-old Byeong-Hun An left with the trophy, the youngest player ever to do so. With the win, An, who missed the first week of high school to play in the tournament, earned an exemption into next year's U.S. Open and British Open and, if tradition holds, he'll be invited to play in the Masters, too.

Grillo said he will try and be back next year.

"Oh yeah... I'll try and be back. I will play in some qualifiers [to try and return to the Amateur Open]. This was a great learning experience for me. Hopefully I'll be back next year and build on this," he said.

Nessie Headed to Edgartown Great Pond

Nessie is not a sea monster but a portable cutterhead dredge, acquired by the Great Pond Foundation to increase the effectiveness of the Edgartown Great Pond's openings to the sea, which are essential in improving the water quality and health of the pond.

The Great Pond Foundation will launch Nessie on Wednesday, Sept. 2 at 5 p.m. at Wilson's Landing in Edgartown. The ceremony is open to the public. Attendees are encouraged to come by boat to join the flotilla as a fitting form of transportation for this event. If not by boat, carpooling is recommended, as parking is limited.

Last year, the foundation leased Nessie and tested her in openings of the pond. She performed well, creating a channel that improved the quality of subsequent openings. Dredging is one

of several components cited in the Massachusetts Estuaries Project Report; other solutions include sewerage of high density residential neighborhoods and otherwise reducing the nitrogen load into the pond (from fertilizers, septic systems and agriculture), growing the oyster populations, and limiting future build-out in the 4,500-acre watershed.

According to foundation president Tom Wallace, the funding goal is \$900,000, the pond's residents, neighbors and friends have made commitments of \$700,000; \$626,650 has been received. "We are confident that even in these troubled economic times, we will reach our goal," Mr. Wallace said.

Anyone wishing to help maintain the health of the Edgartown Great Pond may send donations to PO Box 2005, Edgartown, MA 02539.

Edna Jacobs Wolf Was Chilmark Summer Resident

Edna Jacobs Wolf died of cancer on August 29 in Baltimore. Ms. Wolf was a longtime summer visitor to Chilmark, starting in 1957. She was also a highly regarded realtor for Long & Foster in Washington, D.C.

Ms. Wolf was born in 1932 and grew up in Norfolk, Virginia. She moved to Washington in 1957. She attended Wheaton College and graduated with a bachelor's degree in psychology from George Washington University. Over the years, she held a number of positions, including president of B'nai B'rith Women International, before becoming a top residential realtor in Washington. She was repeatedly honored by the Washington, D.C. Association of Realtors and was an active member of the Greater Capital Area Association of Realtors. She was a voracious reader, deeply involved in civic affairs and community organizations including the United Negro College Fund, and active in the Democratic party. She also owned and showed champion Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, including Ch. Redthea Flashy Dude.

Beginning in 1957, she spent part of each summer with her family in Chilmark. It was a great disappointment that her illness made travel to the Island impossible this year. Ms. Wolf had many dear friends on-Island. In recent years, she was a member of the Vineyard Haven Yacht Club. She will be buried in the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center Cemetery.

Ms. Wolf's marriage to William B. Wolf Jr. ended in divorce. She is survived by her three children, Susan Wolf of Minneapolis, William Wolf 3rd of Middleburg, Va., and Vicki Rosenfield of Baltimore, their spouses, and six

grandchildren, as well as her brother, Frank Jacobs of Virginia Beach, Va., and her companion in recent years, Dan Tellep of Carmel, Calif.

A celebration of her life will be held at a future date. In lieu of flowers, donations may be directed to the Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center for Lung Cancer Research, c/o Dr. Charles Rudin, 100 North Charles street, Suite 234, Baltimore, Maryland 21201.

Elinor Clement Littleton

Elinor Clement Littleton, formerly of Chilmark, died Friday, August 28, 2009 in West Yarmouth.

She was born June 16, 1924 in Wayne, Pa., to Mildred and DeWitt Clement. She is survived by her husband of 63 years, Frederick C.N. Littleton; daughters Millie Garroway, Jean Knight and Elinor Garan; sons Frederick Littleton Jr. and Clement Littleton; 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Three grandsons predeceased her.

During her 60 years in Wayne, she was an active member of St. David's Episcopal Church and worked at the Women's Exchange. She moved to Chilmark with her husband in 1985 and worked for many years at Alley's General Store in West Tisbury. She was an active member of the Chilmark Church and volunteered for the Martha's Vineyard Hospice.

A service of thanksgiving for her life will be held at the Chilmark Church on Saturday, Oct. 10, 2009.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to Hospice of Martha's Vineyard, hospice@vineyard.net.

Fall Home & Garden



It feels like summer weather has finally just arrived, but September and the beginning of autumn are just around the corner. With the changing of the season you'll find everything you need to prepare your home and garden for the colder months ahead, as well as plan for home improvements during the off-season, in the Gazette's Fall Home & Garden section.

And this year, we're celebrating the colors of fall with a full color edition. Published in a convenient tabloid format, this edition will highlight feature material on fall gardening, home decorating and remodeling, cold weather preparedness and much more.

Look for your copy of this section in the Friday, October 2nd edition of the Vineyard Gazette.

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