

Features

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Helping Local Students to the Top

By Corinne Segal

In Alex Drechsler's mind, his bar mitzvah was more than a celebration; it gave him the chance to help others. Two years ago, he and his father Robert Drechsler founded "To the Top With Laptops," an organization which awarded five Port Chester High School graduating seniors with new Dell laptops.

These students, Robert Drechsler said, "achieved both academically and in terms of community service, but had a financial need and wouldn't be able to afford laptops on their own."

"I think we all have a responsibility to help other people in the community, people who aren't as privileged as you and I are," said Alex Drechsler.

Robert Drechsler added that they had not expected to expand to other schools until he

sparked the interest of a foundation while playing a charity golf event. "I told them what we do in Port Chester High School and they said, 'That's exactly the kind of thing we like to donate money to,'" he said. The organization soon received grants of about \$2500 from the Chicago Title Insurance Company, Hudson Valley National Foundation, and Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, as well as smaller donations from firms and individuals.

The organization recently held a fundraiser at the Bonnie Briar Country Club in Larchmont. According to Robert Drechsler, the event was a huge success. "We raised enough money, through both people who gave money and attended and also through the live auction and raffle, in order to expand to

3 schools and 15 different recipients," he said.

This year, the organization reached out to Yonkers High School and New Rochelle High School in addition to Port Chester. The five PCHS students were presented with their computers at a May 22 ceremony.

Yonkers and New Rochelle announced its winners on June 16 and June 18, respectively.

Port Chester High School Chairperson of Guidance Andrea Davis said that the recipients are chosen through a small committee from the guidance department. "Each counselor knows their students really well, and we sit together and we decide who would be really good candidates," she said.

Robert Drechsler said, "It's usually kids who have had a lot of hardship and yet overcome those hardships to achieve academically and other ways as well - leadership in the school and leadership in the community."

If these students lack laptops in college, said Davis, they will be at a huge disadvantage. "Many of the colleges require

that they buy a laptop," she said. "They are at a disadvantage if they don't have one."

"A laptop is a great way to help empower the kids because it's such an important tool today in school and college," agreed Robert Drechsler, adding, "We make sure they're really state of the art."

Robert Drechsler said that he hopes the charity will continue to grow. "We received communications from Mamaroneck HS asking if we could add that school and we told them that we would certainly consider it for next year," he said.

"I would like to do it until college," said Alex Drechsler. "My sister will hopefully take it over, because when I go to college, she'll have her bat mitzvah."

"It's great to see the impact you can have," he added. "I don't know if so many students in Blind Brook are able to have that impact on people and be able to see the people who they impact."

"We are so grateful," said Davis. "We hope it goes on forever and the excitement we can see in the kids' faces is indescribable."