

WARWICK BEACON

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Scholarship program rewards local philanthropist

By COLBY CREMINS

The ability to put the needs of others before oneself is a rare trait in most adults; the ability for a child to do so is simply remarkable.

Ten-year-old Zackary Whelan has spent the last four years raising money and donating toys to children in need. Lemonade stands, walk-a-thons, toy drives, any event he could think of, Whelan participated in.

"It makes me feel better that other kids and families in need are getting help," said Whelan.

Whelan has won the store and regional portions of the Kohl's department store's "Kids Who Care Scholarship Program." Kohl's recognized more than 2,100 kids nationwide. This year's program commemorates 10 years of honoring the initiatives of kids across the country.

"Throughout the last decade of the Kohl's Kids Who Care Scholarship Program, we have recognized thousands of truly amazing young people that have gone miles above and beyond what is normally expected of a child, and our 2010 winners are no exception," said Julie Gardner, Kohl's executive vice president and chief marketing officer.

Whelan's mother entered him in the contest after she

heard about it through an email.

"He's always been a giving kid that helps others. He is a good soul that way," said Renee Whelan-Gomes.

When Whelan was in second grade his school was doing a Pasta for Pennies program, and all the money raised was donated to children with leukemia. After that, Whelan found himself constantly looking for more charity work to lend his time and efforts to.

One year Whelan saved \$70 to buy a scooter, but at the last minute he decided to donate all the money to a walk-a-thon.

"I started thinking and thought the other kids needed the money more than I needed the scooter," said Whelan.

A lot of Whelan's charitable efforts are directed to the Ronald McDonald House. One of his good friends died from meningitis a few years ago and the House stepped in.

"The school said that Ronald McDonald House helped a lot," said Whelan.

When he is not collecting pennies or participating in a walk-a-thon, Whelan is scouring through his toys to see what he can give away.

"He has been donating toys since before the second grade," said Whelan-

Gomes.

Often times Whelan will post his toys on craigslist and allow people to select what they want. After selections are made, Whelan will put together packages to pick up, or he sometimes delivers them.

"It is a privilege to be able to recognize the selfless acts of these stand-up kids that have touched the lives of countless others across the country," said Gardner.

Of the more than 200 regional winners, 10 national winners will each receive a total of \$10,000 in scholarships, and Kohl's will donate \$1,000 to a nonprofit on each national winner's behalf. The winners will be announced later this month.

Kohl's Cares for Kids benefits children's health and education initiatives nationwide through a merchandise program featuring books and toys where all of the net profit benefits children and fundraising gift cards in addition to the A-Team associate volunteer program.

Whelan has inspired classmates to participate in charitable efforts.

"There are other kids in need and I like to help them out a lot and it makes me feel good," said Whelan.