

Fall 1997 – Baltimore Jewish Times

One For The Good Guys

Reprinted from The Baltimore Jewish Times

Minutes after a recent varsity soccer game in New York, a Jewish college student from Columbia was surprised with a bouquet of roses and balloons, a trophy and a whopping \$10,000 check in recognition of his community service in behalf of young cancer patients.

The BALTIMORE JEWISH TIMES nominated Doug Ulman for the "Good As Gold Awards" in an annual nationwide contest in which profiles of candidates are submitted by the media outlets in which stories appeared.

An article about Mr. Ulman, who has been battling cancer for 18 months, and his efforts to help other young adult and teen cancer patients cope with their illness, was featured in the July 4, 1997, issue of the Jewish Times.

The 4-year-old contest is sponsored by Publishers Clearing House, a New York-based multi-magazine subscription agency that also sells books, videos and music recordings via direct mail, and which donates nearly 50 percent of its profits to charitable causes.

But the company is more commonly known for its sweepstakes contests – particularly its annual \$10 million SuperPrize awarded on Super Bowl Sunday – in which its "Prize Patrol" surprises winners at their homes, bearing flowers and oversized checks.

"I was shocked when they came," said Mr. Ulman, 20, a junior, and varsity soccer player at Brown University in Providence, R.I. "I recognized them, but I didn't know what they were doing. It was pretty exciting."

The "Good As Gold Awards," which are presented to 10 winners annually, were developed by David Sayer, executive director of advertising and public relations for Publishers Clearing House. He also serves as leader of the five member Prize Patrol team.

"Every time we would come back from these [sweepstakes award] trips, I would say, "Too bad we couldn't give more to those people who do such good things for the community," Mr. Sayer said.

Since then, Publishers Clearing House solicits each year about 2,000 media outlets to submit their published or video stories of the volunteers.

"We feel the local media has it's finger on the pulse of the community better than we could do in our headquarters in Long Island," said Mr. Sayer.

This past year he said, organizers encouraged the nominations of candidates who are young adults. A panel of outside judges from the media selected Mr. Ulman and nine other winners out of hundreds of nominees.

"Doug's name came to the top," Mr. Sayer said. "His story was very touching and very inspiring. We're hoping these awards will inspire others to serve in their community."

Mr. Ulman, a 1995 graduate of Centennial High School in Ellicott City and former Maccabi Games soccer player, was diagnosed with chondrosarcoma in August 1996 after a chest X-ray taken during an asthmatic attack revealed a tumor in his rib. The tumor and six inches of one rib were

removed. But seven months later, two melanomas were found on Mr. Ulman's chest and upper arm. He underwent surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital, and doctors say that his diagnosis is favorable.

Frustrated that there were no support groups for patients between the ages of 15 and 30 dealing with issues specific to their age, Mr. Ulman and his parents Louis and Diana, established the Ulman Fund of the Wellness Community, Baltimore. The fund, based out of their Columbia home, was set up to guide young adults with cancer through the medical maze and provide them with emotional support.

The Ulman fund is an affiliate of the non-profit national Wellness Community, which has branches in 18 cities and provides free support services for cancer patients and their families.

About \$75,000 has been generated by private donations and several fund raisers, said Mrs. Ulman.

Proceeds have been used in part to publish the first two of a series of five informational pamphlets, designed by Mr. Ulman, for young adults. They will be distributed at health centers and hospitals locally, and eventually, nationally.

A few months ago, the Ulman Fund also developed an interactive computer Web site for young adults with cancer - particularly those who are away at college - to serve as an electronic support group.

A support group for young adults was started Feb. 1 in Providence, and another one will begin March 4 in Columbia.

"We'll be evaluation pilot programs that eventually will be modeled in other cities that have requested them," said Mrs. Ulman, a member of the Reconstructionist Columbia Jewish Congregation.

After Mr. Ulman, a bar mitzvah at the Reform Temple Isaiah, was selected by the judges, Publishers Clearing House contacted his parents about his college schedule so the Prize Patrol could determine an opportune time to present him the prize.

Shortly before Thanksgiving, the Prize Patrol showed up on a Long Island soccer field just after Brown lost an important NCAA tournament soccer game to St. John's University. The patrol, accompanied by a video cameraman, was carrying about two dozen roses, eight balloons, a crystal trophy engraved with "Good As Gold Award" and the \$10,000 check.

"Doug didn't quite understand what was going on," Mr. Sayer recalled. "It was the end of the game, and we marched across the field. We didn't know who we were looking for, so we called out his name and the players pointed Doug out."

As for Mr. Ulman's plans for his big winnings?

"No decisions have been made," he said. "But it will probably be going toward the fund."