

## From Nobody to Heart Hero



**From Nobody to Heart Hero.** As part of a school project for the Who Is Nobody program William E. Brown Public School student Madison Montgomery decided to focus on matters of the heart by creating a Heart Hero basket consisting of various sports items. With raffle tickets sold to students and staff at school, funds raised from the sales will benefit Heart and Stroke Foundation.

**Eddie Chau, staff**

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When it comes to school projects, Madison Montgomery thinks of matters of the heart.

As students participated in 'Everyday is Somebody,' a derivative of the Who Is Nobody? program where students are encouraged to create a character building concept about themselves, the William E. Brown student used her heart as inspiration to help the charitable organization Heart and Stroke Foundation.

For the past week Madison has sold about \$200 worth of tickets to students and school staff with the prize of winning a gift basket filled with sports items such as balls, trophies and candies. Each ticket asks people to become a 'Heart Hero' for the charity.

"I sold a lot of tickets," said the ever shy Madison. "It's a pretty popular basket."

The heart is something that hits Madison close to home. She had a condition known as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) which causes heart muscles to become thick.

The thickening makes it hard for blood to leave the heart forcing the organ to work harder to pump blood. Four years ago Madison had surgery to correct it.

"Her heart was 89 per cent blocked," said Madison's mother, Debbie. "It's very rare for a child to have it. She had to have open heart surgery."

The condition is hereditary. Debbie said Madison's grandfather had the same symptoms.

For the Everyday is Somebody project Madison turned her focus to Heart and Stroke Foundation, which provided the school with a defibrillator device in case of emergency.

A defibrillator is an electronic device which administers electric shock to the heart through the chest to restore normal rhythm of the heart. William E. Brown is the only public school in the area to have one on site.

Debbie said the safety of her child is reassured knowing the school has a defibrillator.

"I can feel safe sending her to school because there is one here," Debbie said. Debbie said Madison will probably have to go through one more surgery in her lifetime before everything is settled.

"She'll probably need a pacemaker installed," Debbie said.

Susan Chouinard, area manager for the Niagara Region for Heart and Stroke, said the organization works with other groups such as Heart Niagara to bring defibrillators to public areas such as schools and arenas. Chouinard said there is an increased chance of survival for people with heart conditions when the use of defibrillator is combined with CPR.

Chouinard said defibrillators are common in public buildings in Barrie, where Chase McEachern, an 11-year-old hockey player diagnosed with atrial flutter, advocated for them to be installed.

"When Chase died it became a priority (for Barrie area)," Chouinard said. "The community fundraised for them."

The units, which cost more than \$4,000, also require extensive training by personnel in each building. It is fundraising done through events such as the Big Bike for Heart and Stroke and Jump Rope For Heart, which contributes to research for eliminating heart disease and stroke.

Chouinard said the foundation is currently advocating the need for defibrillators in every public building in Ontario. A provincial bill, Bill 41, the Defibrillator Access Act, has already passed second reading at Queen's Park.

"If this bill passes there's a greater potential to save more lives," Chouinard said.

Debbie said Madison has done a lot to fundraise for the organization with the help of family and friends. More money will be raised when Madison participates in Jump Rope For Heart at W.E. Brown later this year.

"The goal was originally to raise \$100 but we're really at \$200 now," Debbie said.