

PRESS RELEASE



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WESTCHESTER YOUTH GIVES \$30K IN BAR MITZVAH GIFTS TO SUPPORT NAOMI BERRIE DIABETES CENTER

New York, NY - March 13 – Robby Sorrel didn't simply send out invitations to his Bar mitzvah and hope for lots of presents and a fun party. The 13-year-old Scarsdale youth, diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes when he was 3, asked all of his guests to donate money to the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, a comprehensive care facility that helps diabetes patients – including Robby – manage their disease and lives.

Robby included the following note with the invitation to his Bar mitzvah:

As many of you know, I have had diabetes since the age of 3. With lots of hard work and help I have not let it slow me down. Not everyone is as lucky. For my mitzvah [community service] project, I am volunteering at the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center helping recently diagnosed kids from underprivileged backgrounds learn to cope with the disease.

If you were planning on giving me a present for my Bar mitzvah, I would like to ask that you consider a donation to the pediatric program at Naomi Berrie instead. The money will help support a summer program that teaches these kids how to manage diabetes in a fun "camp-like" setting and pay for medical care they badly need. Thank you for your generosity.

Thirty thousand dollars and a joyous celebration later, Robby's project was complete. "Robby's achievement was simply incredible," says Dr. Robin Goland, co-director of the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center and Irving Associate Professor of Medicine at the Columbia University College of Physicians & Surgeons. "We're so proud of his effort,

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his accomplishment, and his staunch advocacy at such a young age. Robby has demonstrated how empowering it is for a patient – regardless of his age – to take charge of his disease, and how that can inspire others to do the same.”

"Robby clearly appreciates how fortunate he is to have excellent medical care, and he wants to share that gift with others," says Rabbi Kenneth Chasen, associate rabbi at Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, N.Y., where Robby celebrated his Bar mitzvah on Jan. 11. "The Bar mitzvah process has taught Robby that being an adult member of the Jewish community obligates him to extend his good fortune to those who are in need, and he has embraced that obligation with a wonderful and generous spirit. I am confident that this will only be the beginning of Robby's commitment."

Robby's advocacy actually began before his Bar mitzvah. He and his family have been active members of the New York Chapter of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF). In 1999, the Sorrel family participated in a JDRF walk and raised more money than any other family. He also was a member of the inaugural JDRF International Children's Congress, which in 1999 lobbied in Washington, D.C., for the federal government to earmark more money for diabetes research. That effort also led almost 30,000 children with diabetes, their friends, and families to write letters to Congress to ask for help in finding a cure for diabetes.

Robby has not allowed diabetes to rule his life. He is a nationally ranked player for the United States Tennis Association and participates in several team sports at Scarsdale Middle School.

About the Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center

The Naomi Berrie Diabetes Center (www.nbdiabetes.org) combines unprecedented family-centered patient care and education with world-class diabetes research programs. Located at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, 168th Street and Broadway in New York City, the center hosts a renowned team of adult and pediatric diabetes experts, which include endocrinologists, educators, family counselors, nutritionists, podiatrists, and ophthalmologists.

Note to editors: For a digital photograph of Robby Sorrel, contact Adar Novak at 212-305-3900 or at an2040@columbia.edu.

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