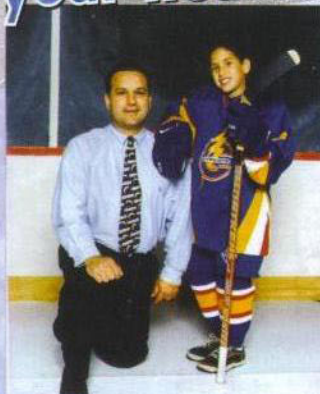


Hockey CAN touch your heart



By Nancy Colby

My friend, John Conenna, recently shared a story with me that touched my heart and I think it will also touch yours. The story is a couple of years old, however definitely still worth sharing. It's a "Pay It Forward" type story directly from the heart. For those of you not familiar with "Pay It Forward", the concept is based on the book by Catherine Hyde, which led to the movie released in 2000 - "Pay it Forward." A 12-year-old schoolboy is

given a class project to complete by his social studies teacher. His task is to come up with a plan that will change the world through direct action. Trevor comes up with the plan to pay it forward by doing a good deed for three people who must in turn each do good deeds for three other people. The basic premise of the movie is that any one person can implement it in his or her own life, at any time, which is exactly what John did a few years ago.

John and his son Vince were at a hockey tournament in Holland, Michigan. This is John's story - "While intently watching Vince play, I noticed that one of the players on the other team broke his stick. I didn't really think too much about it until the lady sitting next to me got up and went down to speak to a man watching by the glass. You couldn't help but hear them arguing about the broken stick. After a couple of minutes of them arguing back and forth, his response to her was, "that's not my problem and not part of our divorce decree, I'm not buying him another stick." She walked away crying and looking very distraught. The period ended and I saw her in the pro shop holding a new stick and talking to the guy behind the counter. I just had to go in and see what was going on. It turns out she didn't have any money with her, nor did she have a credit card. She wanted to give the guy her driver's license and send him a check when she returned home. You guessed it; the pro shop was unable to provide this type of service. At that time, I walked over and asked how much the stick cost."

Without a bat of an eye John was paying for this kid's new stick, so that he could continue to play in the tournament. The mom and the kid behind the counter were shocked; a complete stranger is willing to buy a \$190.00 stick for a kid he don't even know - and one on the opposing team. Yes, John Conenna is that type of a man, he didn't think twice about helping out a family in need.

"The mom was so happy and grateful, she pleaded with me for my address so she could send me a check as soon as she got home. I told her that she's paid me back already, the fact that her son can continue to play is all I needed."

"Then I walked down to her son's locker room with her carrying the new stick. Sitting in the locker room was her son, Lawrence, who was very depressed because he didn't know how he was going to continue playing in the tournament. When his mom, Debbie, came into the locker room, holding a brand new stick, Lawrence's eyes were about the size of saucers. He couldn't believe it, because at that time, he knew he would be able to continue to play in the tournament without having to borrow a stick from one of his friends. Debbie explained that John had purchased the stick for him and he couldn't thank John enough. You could see how proud he was when he skated out on the ice with his new stick, his spirits were definitely lifted."

"After the game, Lawrence asked his mom who that guy was and why he bought the stick. Debbie tried to explain that she was sitting close to him during the game when the stick broke and saw her arguing with his father. "John then saw me in the pro shop with the lost look on my face when I couldn't pay for the stick and offered to buy it for you." At that point, Debbie knew that her son had learned a valuable lesson that he would carry with him forever."

Over the years Debbie continues to send John and his family a Christmas card with a note in it, reminding John that she will never forget the kindness he bestowed on her family. The happiness that stick brought to her son, when he was on the brink of crying, is a moment John will cherish forever and all the thanks he'll ever need.

Pay It Forward - Changing the World, one Favor at a Time

I encourage everyone, to formulate your own ideas of how you can pay it forward. Good ideas inspire more good ideas; it serves as a forum and a source of funding for the development and fruition of inspiration. Practicing the "Pay It Forward" principle will make you alert to unexpected kindness from strangers toward you, and you may find yourself becoming more grateful for everyday kindness and consideration from people you don't even know.

"Being nice is not a physical trait passed on from your parents. It's not in your genes. It's within you. Being nice is an ongoing, lifelong course. You never get to stop learning what it means and what it takes to be nice, but it's well worth the effort because being nice can bring you rewards you never imagined."

AMICI D' ITALIA

ITALIAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION



The purpose and eligibility of Amici d' Italia (Friends of Italy) is dedicated to the promotion of the Italian American heritage.

CALL FOR DETAILS

JOIN US! So together we can make a difference

WE CAN ALL GIVE TOGETHER TO OUR ITALIAN COMMUNITY, AND PUT OUR IDEAS TO WORK!

Yearly Membership Only \$50.00!
Additional Family Members \$25.00!

Amount Check or Money order _____
 Name: _____ Date: _____
 Address: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Sponsored by: _____

AMICI D' ITALIA ASSOCIATION,
 P.O. BOX 595, RIVER GROVE, IL 60171
 Telephone: 773.836.1595

Mail your application and we will send your yearly membership card and certificate

www.amiciorgit.net

"A Country is not a mere territory; the particular territory is only its foundation. The Country is the idea which rises upon that foundation; it is the sentiment of love, the sense of fellowship which binds together all the sons of that territory." Quote: Giuseppe Mazzini