

Charity pairs donated birthday gifts with young patients

By KARA STARZYK
SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

Paxton Terris of Weston said he received more than 30 gifts for his seventh birthday. But for Paxton, the most significant of all those gifts was the one he later gave to a 10-year-old boy hospitalized at Plantation General Hospital.

That boy's appreciation inspired Paxton to start the What's Mine Is Yours Foundation, a nonprofit organization that collects children's donated birthday gifts for the sick.

"What's Mine Is Yours Foundation reaches out to affluent kids, encouraging them to donate one of their new birthday gifts. Most foundations only collect gifts during the holidays, but birthdays are year-round," said Michelle Terris, who suggested her son bring one of his presents to the hospital on July 24, his birthday.

Aiming to instill the importance of compassion, Terris said she waited until Paxton was old enough to understand that he was honoring someone else on his special day. Due to a severe asthma and sinus condition, Paxton had been a frequent hospital patient himself so he did not hesitate in helping sick children, she said.

He chose a Star Wars Lego set, saying it was the perfect gift to give the boy whose mobility was limited

by an intravenous tube.

"The boy said he was good at building Legos. He was happy, and we shook hands," Paxton said.

Nurses, moved by Paxton's gesture, contacted Pediatrics Department Director Wendy Stuart.

"I had to meet the young man who made such a selfless gesture. Kids his age do not usually think about doing such things. I told him it was awesome," Stuart said.

When Paxton left the hospital, he told his family he wished to donate all his birthday gifts to sick children. His eagerness motivated his 5-year-old sister, Peyton, who told her mother, "I want to bring presents to the hospital for my birthday, too."

Terris said her son is a role model for his sister as well as his classmates and friends. He spoke to his first grade class at Indian Trace Elementary School about the foundation. Paxton also was honored by his karate class at Imperial Martial Arts in Weston.

"He demonstrated the leadership skills that are emphasized in karate. We made a positive example of him by hanging [his photo] on the bulletin board along with other students who have demonstrated random acts of kindness," said the school's master, Gustavo Alvarez, who designated Imperial Martial Arts as a drop-off site for



A GIFT FROM THE HEART: Paxton Terris, 7, decorates a gift bag for the What's Mine Is Yours Foundation, which he started on his seventh birthday when he gave one of his presents to a young patient at Plantation General Hospital. Photo by Kara Starzyk

donated gifts.

"Children who give a gift will receive a 30-day, no-cost membership or a star to be worn on their karate uniform."

After Paxton told neighbors and friends about the What's Mine Is Yours Foundation, he said there was a tremendous response throughout the community, his mother said.

"Parents are willing to donate their time and money because the foun-

ation helps teach their kids about the importance of giving to others," she said.

Financial donations are needed to purchase craft supplies that children will use to decorate gift bags with the foundation's name. Terris said the gifts will be delivered on a monthly basis when permission is granted by Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital, Plantation General Hospital and other hospi-

tals interested in participating.

To volunteer or donate to the What's Mine Is Yours Foundation, call Michelle Terris at 954-605-9297 or e-mail michterris@aol.com. Drop-off sites are: Imperial Martial Arts, 1375 Shotgun Road in Weston; Pediatric Ophthalmology Consultants; 220 SW 84th Ave. in Plantation, and Children's Medical Association, 8430 W. Broward Blvd. in Plantation.