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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Innovative Truck Puts White Plains Preschooler in the Driver's Seat

High School Junior donates a specially modified tiny truck to a United Preschool Center student with special needs through a GoBabyGo! project

WHITE PLAINS, NY – On Wednesday, April 21, 2021, Cerebral Palsy of Westchester's (CPW) United Preschool Center (UPC) welcomed High School Junior Leo Rosen, a resident of Purchase, NY, to campus to present an F-150 retrofitted tiny truck to a student with special needs. Rosen handed over the keys to a four-year-old student recipient who has a disability that affects his mobility. Joined by family, CPW and UPC Staff, the boy had the chance to test drive his truck for the first time, which was built to satisfy his specific OT/PT needs, allowing him to move around easily by way of this battery-boosted ride.



Front row, L-R: Steven Cabanas Montes; Leo Rosen; Paul Montes, Steven's father; Rosemary Kuttiyara, UPC Occupational Therapist. Back row, L-R: Candelaria Cabanas, Steven's mother; Ana Martinez, UPC; Leslie and Alan Rosen (Leo's parents); Stephanie Russo Pastilha, CPW Associate Executive Director; Marcy Weintraub, UPC Director. Photo by Angela Licht

Yesterday's event was a culmination of a process that started last summer, when high-schooler Leo Rosen reached out to Cerebral Palsy of Westchester, looking for a child who could benefit from such a car or truck. Rosen had received a donation of several trucks from the Connecticut GoBabyGo! Collaborative (Hamden, CT), which takes donated Fisher Price ride-on toy vehicles and outfits them for young children with disabilities, providing them the opportunity to move around independently. With oversight via Zoom from an engineer who has experience with GoBabyGo! modifications, as well as

insight from the United Preschool's occupational therapist Rosemary Kuttiyara, Rosen was able to modify the truck in his family's garage, adapting the vehicle to fit the specific needs of the child. Additionally, Kuttiyara helped Rosen put together proper operational instructions for the child's parents.

In addition to the F-150 truck recently completed, Leo Rosen is in the process of adapting three other tiny cars, donated by the Connecticut GoBabyGo! Collaborative, to be retrofitted for other local preschool-aged children with disabilities. "I am interested in becoming an engineer, I love to build, and I want to do whatever I can to help others," Rosen explained to United Preschool Director Marcy Weintraub. A current high school student at Rye Country Day School, Rosen has spent much of this past year studying remotely from his home in Purchase, NY, and came up with this project as a way to keep himself engaged during this year of quarantine. Leo is eager to outfit more cars for CPW's UPC students, and is looking into obtaining slightly bigger vehicles that could be modified for older, school-aged children with disabilities. "I love making kids happy," Leo stated as he watched the child successfully drive around on his new power wheels.

The **GoBabyGo!** program began in 2012 with founder Cole Galloway the University of Delaware. Integrating assistive technology, families, clinicians and industry partners, the program provides children with disabilities the opportunity for movement, mobility, and socialization. The network of engaged participants and leaders has expanded nationwide as individuals and organizations independently spearhead their own programs to build ride-on cars for children in their communities. For more information, visit www.udel.edu/gobabygo.

The United Preschool Center (UPC), located at 456 North Street in White Plains, offers an integrated learning experience for children with and without disabilities. Program administrators collaborate with various school districts throughout Westchester County, and UPC is an authorized Universal Full-Day Pre-Kindergarten program site for the White Plains School District. The United Preschool Center is a division of Cerebral Palsy of Westchester.

Now in its 72nd year, **Cerebral Palsy of Westchester's** mission is to advance the independence, productivity, and full citizenship of people with all developmental disabilities including autism, neurological impairments, intellectual disabilities, epilepsy, and cerebral palsy. Through a comprehensive network of educational programs, day services, residential sites, therapeutic services, employment training, recreation programs and advocacy, the agency helps thousands of children and adults in Westchester and Fairfield Counties live more productive and satisfying lives. The organization's motto is: *Realizing Tomorrow's Potential . . . Today!*

*For **high resolution photos** and more information, contact Tia Levinson, CPW's Director of Development and Public Relations, at 914-937-3800 ext. 353 or email tia.levinson@cpwestchester.org.*

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Additional images on next page



Front row, L-R: Leo Rosen with preschool student; Paul Montes, the student's father; Rosemary Kuttiyara, UPC Occupational Therapist. Back row, L-R: Candelaria Cabanas, the student's mother; Ana Martinez, UPC; Leslie and Alan Rosen (Leo's parents); Stephanie Russo Pastilha, CPW Associate Executive Director; Marcy Weintraub, UPC Director. Photo by Angela Licht



Leo Rosen and UPC student – behind the wheel for the first time! Photos by Angela Licht



Adaptations being made in Leo Rosen's family's garage this spring. Photos by Leo Rosen.