

June 6, 2022

Graduating High Schooler, Leo Rosen, Put White Plains Preschoolers in the Driver's Seat

High school senior Rosen donates his third specially modified tiny truck to a special needs student at the United Preschool Center through a GoBabyGo! project

WHITE PLAINS, NY – On Monday, June 6, 2022, Cerebral Palsy of Westchester's (CPW) United Preschool Center (UPC) welcomed High School Senior Leo Rosen, a resident of Purchase, NY, to campus to present an F-150 retrofitted tiny truck to a student with special needs, his third such donation. Rosen handed over the keys to a five-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: Rosemary Kuttiyara, UPC Occupational Therapist, Dante Limoli, Christina Limoli, Dante's mother. Back row, L-R: Ana Martinez, UPC; Leo Rosen, Marcy Weintraub, UPC Director. Photo by S.Russo

Yesterday's event was the culmination of a project that began in 2020, when high-schooler Leo Rosen reached out to Cerebral Palsy of Westchester, looking for children who could benefit from such a car or truck. Three students from UPC, two boys and a girl, have now received trucks custom fitted by Rosen.

Rosen had requested and 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 trucks in his family's garage, adapting the vehicles to fit the specific needs of each child. Among other adaptations, the car's steering wheel was modified with handles made of PVC pipe. Rosen commented, *"there was a lot of trial and error involved in getting the custom elements [like the chair and seatbelts] integrated for each truck. I had never seen "goal post*

steering” before working on the second and third truck.” Additionally, Kuttiyara helped Rosen put together proper operational instructions for the child’s parents.

“I love to build, and I want to do whatever I can to help others,” Rosen explained to United Preschool Director Marcy Weintraub. A graduating high school student at Rye Country Day School, Rosen initially came up with this project as a way to keep himself engaged during quarantine, while studying remotely from home. Leo is happy to have been able to outfit so many cars for CPW’s UPC students, and is working with students in Mamaroneck to hopefully continue the project as he enters Cornell University in the fall. “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 73rd 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 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.



Left: Leo Rosen with Montes family and UPC staff April 21 2021. Right: Leo Rosen with Yzaguirre family August 6, 2021. Photos by Angela Licht

