

Long Island Now

Scoring on autism, for teammate's brother

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Syosset High's boys lacrosse team may have lost its Nassau County semifinal on Thursday, but it was still a successful year, in ways much more meaningful than hoisting a trophy.

The team has raised \$30,000 for an autism foundation co-founded by one of its players, whose little brother suffers from the condition.

Sixteen-year-old Kyle Haber, a starter for the Braves, formed Ascent Youth Alliance to Battle Autism in 2002 along with his brothers, twins Ryan and Sean, 17, and

their father, Larry. The Habers were motivated to act soon after learning that the family's youngest son, 11-year-old Conor, was autistic.

"The mission has always been to raise awareness, tolerance and acceptance for kids with autism," Larry Haber said. "The other part is to raise money for the education and social skill enhancement for kids with autism."

Haber said his family knew their lives would change forever when they got Conor's diagnosis. He and his sons decided they were going to turn to sports to help the autism community, and began auctioning off sports collectibles.

This year their work made its way to the Syosset High lacrosse team, a group for which the concept of giving back isn't new. For the past few years coach John Calabria has set team goals around benefiting the community.

"I've got a group of 10th, 11th and 12th grade boys and as their coach, I want to spend the season getting them to think about something besides themselves," he said.

Through the Brave Goals 4 Autism and Brave Saves 4 Autism programs, people contributed \$1 for each goal and save made. In addition, each player on the team worked to get four volunteers who weren't on the team. Each of those volunteers were responsible for acquiring 10 \$20 donations.

"Everyone just loves doing it because it's rewarding, it's fun, it just gets the whole entire community involved," Kyle Haber said. "It's fun, so everyone is accepting of it. Everyone knows what I go through with my brother."

The lacrosse teams at Garden City and Hewlett high schools are now participating in the program, and Larry Haber said he hopes to have different sports teams from 25 Long Island schools involved by the end of the year.

"We live in one of the nicest regions in the country, Haber said. "The bottom line is life is pretty good here, so the idea is to try and get kids involved, to make a difference and try to give back."

Learn more about Ascent Youth Alliance to Battle Autism

www.ayabany.org & www.facebook.com/BraveGoals4Autism

To form a chapter in your town, whether for lacrosse or any other sport, please email kshlax34@aol.com and larryhaber@colgaterrea.com. Easy, fun & rewarding community service with great perks and props!

If Not You, Then Who? If Not Now, Then When?

Trailer to "Making a Difference-AYABA" : www.youtube.com/user/AYABANY

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