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EAST WINDSOR: Boye a special man to be feted by recipients of mystery mitzvah

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By Joanne Degnan, Staff Writer



Eddie Boye

EAST WINDSOR — For nearly four years, the Rimon Center for Jewish Learning on Dutch Neck Road had a mystery on its hands.

A random act of kindness, a *mitzvah*, was occurring in the twilight hours three times a week when someone unaffiliated with the center was retrieving the garbage and recyclable trash from behind the building and dragging it to the curb for pickup — even returning the cans to their place afterward.

The center’s volunteer handyman, Bruce Herl, of the nearby Wynbrook apartments, says he would arrive in the morning to do the

job only to discover it already had been done for him.

”We were confused and curious about it for the longest time,” Mr. Herl recalled this week.

Livia Mezrich, Rimon’s founder, even asked the police to keep an eye out for the center’s mysterious helper because she wanted to thank him.

”The police officer laughed and said he had never taken a police report about someone doing something good before,” Ms. Mezrich said. “So as the years went by, I just learned to accept that there was someone out there doing a good deed who wanted to remain anonymous.”

Last winter, after disabled neighborhood resident Eddie Boye was struck and killed by a car as he was riding his adult tricycle about a half-mile from Rimon, Ms. Mezrich finally learned that it was he who had been the center’s good Samaritan all along. The fact that she had never even met Mr. Boye, and only knew of him from seeing him around on his tricycle, touched her deeply.

”He had a good *neshama*,” Ms. Mezrich said, using the Hebrew word for soul. “Maimonides says the highest level of giving is to give anonymously, and Eddie truly exemplified that.”

On Sunday, Rimon will honor Mr. Boye posthumously with the *Avodat Halev* Service of Heart

Award. Jewish Symphony Orchestra violinist Diana Tsaliovich will perform and Mayor Janice Mironov will present the award on behalf of the center to the late Mr. Boye's sister, Edith Hoffman.

Ms. Hoffman said Wednesday that since her brother's death, she has heard similar stories about Eddie's many acts of kindness. Ms. Hoffman said she was particularly touched by one sympathy card she received from a stranger.

"She wrote that when her children were younger, they would stay for after-school activities at the Kreps school, and Eddie always made sure they crossed the corner of Dutch Neck and Oak Creek roads safely because there was no crossing guard there that late in the day," Ms. Hoffman said.

"When this woman's children got older and got their driver's licenses, they made a pact with all their friends to drive carefully and always watch out for Eddie," Ms. Hoffman said. "They called him Eddie, the Man on the Bike."

Mr. Boye, 54, was riding that same bike on his way home from the gym Feb. 16 when he was struck from behind by a car at Dutch Neck Road and Wilmor Drive. He died shortly afterward at the hospital. The police said the driver, a 55-year-old township woman, was under the influence of the prescription drug Ambien, an insomnia medication, at the time of the crash. She faces charges that include second-degree vehicular homicide.

Ms. Hoffman says her brother, a janitor who was laid off from his job in Hightstown five years ago, spent the past two decades of his life taking care of 95-year-old Mabel Tiger, who rented him a room in her Heathwood Drive home.

"Mrs. Tiger has told me she has been very lonesome since Eddie's death," Ms. Hoffman said. "He was more like another son to her than a tenant."

Born with cerebral palsy that left him with the use of only one arm, Mr. Boye, nevertheless, did all the yard work at Mrs. Tiger's house, including snow shoveling and lawn mowing, Ms. Hoffman said.

Mr. Boye's disability never deterred him from accomplishing feats that many able-bodied people would have found difficult, Ms. Hoffman said. Despite the fact that he also walked with a limp, he twice ran the entire 26-mile New York City marathon, as well as the Boston marathon, Ms. Hoffman said. He also was an avid bowler in the local Wednesday night mixed league and worked out regularly at the local gym.

"Eddie really was an inspiration to a lot of people," Ms. Hoffman said.

Mr. Herl said he often stopped to chat with Mr. Boye when he'd see him out mowing the lawn or pedaling around the neighborhood. He said he began to suspect that Mr. Boye might be the one helping out the center after he saw him once walking away from the back of Rimov's building very early one morning.

”He seemed nervous because he knew I spotted him back there,” Mr. Herl recalled. “He didn’t talk to me like he normally would if I saw him around the neighborhood. He just walked down the trail into the park and kept looking back over his shoulder at me to see if I was watching him.”

Mr. Herl said Mr. Boye’s secretive manner that day made it clear he didn’t want anyone to know what he had been doing for the center.

”He didn’t want any recognition,” Mr. Herl said. “I decided not to even tell Livia at the time that I suspected it was Eddie. After I read in the newspaper though that he had died, I knew I had to tell her.”

Ms. Mezrich recalled that heartbreaking conversation.

”Bruce told me he thought he knew who it was and that he wouldn’t be coming around anymore,” Ms. Mezrich said. “And, of course, he was right about that.”

Ms. Hoffman said her intensely private younger brother who preferred anonymity would probably be embarrassed by the service award from Rimon.

”My brother, Freddie, said to me recently, ‘Edith, Eddie would have never wanted all this,’” Ms. Hoffman said. “But still, it’s good it’s happening because if Eddie is looking down from heaven he will know how much people loved him.”

The music recital and award presentation is open to the public and will be held at 5 p.m. Sunday at Rimon, 483 Dutch Neck Road, East Windsor. For ticket information, call 918-9750 or e-mail info@rimoncenter.org.