

Family's pop tab collecting is payback for Ronald McDonald House care

BY MARILYN THOMAS
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When you pop the top of a soda can or a beer, think about saving the pop tab for Dylan Parry of Homewood.

The Homewood-Flossmoor High School senior and his mom, Brooke King LaBreck, have been collecting the little bits of aluminum for years for the benefit of the Ronald McDonald House. This year, their donation came to approximately 160 pounds of tabs.

Dylan was born with a congenital defect and spent weeks at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago before he was strong enough to have a life-saving surgery to remove a cyst from his chest cavity where a lung should have developed. The cyst crowded out his other lung and heart.

Traveling between Homewood and the hospital "was just out of the question. I had to be able to run there at a moment's notice," LaBreck said. She was able to stay close to Dylan by living at the Ronald McDonald House.

"Essentially they took every life's worry off my plate so I could focus on being there for him. It was everything to me," LaBreck said, and when she checked out and didn't get a bill, she knew she'd find a way to support the organization.

"I vowed then that I would do whatever I could to raise awareness and funding for Ronald McDonald House, and it started with something as simple as collecting



Provided Photo

H-F High senior Dylan Parry with the 2022 pop tab collection benefitting the Ronald McDonald House.

my pop tabs and when Dylan was old enough, he started pestering people for their pop tabs too, and that's how it grew beyond our household," LaBreck said.

Then Dylan's neighbor, Willow School second grade teacher Patti Jo Boehm, learned of the family's efforts and about five years ago decided to make it a project for her class to help them expand their awareness of the needs of others.

But Boehm hoped to give students a personal connection so they'd understand why

they were saving the pop tabs. LaBreck was invited to Willow to present a power point to the class explaining about Dylan's care and her time at Ronald McDonald House, and how the family made it a year-round project to collect the pop tabs.

The teacher said the personal connection LaBreck offers the students is helping them "understand it more and feel more responsible and more inclined to do something. We have a collection container in our room. We fill that up in no time," Boehm

said. "Kids bring them in plastic bags, and people around school save them for us, too."

Students at Churchill School and Flossmoor Community Church preschool program are saving the pop tabs too. Friends, families, businesses and the community are learning about Dylan's efforts and dropping pop tabs off for the collection.

Dylan makes his yearly collection day around the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. LaBreck thought it was a great service project for that day.

"I started documenting how much we're collecting in 2014 when his school got behind him, it went from an impressive two boxes of pop tabs to now 160 pounds," LaBreck said. "It's always surprising when people say all I have is this little baggie, but Dylan and I pick up collections and it is amazing how those turn into a box worth. Everyone counts, every single tab counts in total and it's really impressive to see how it all adds up."

LaBreck explained that the pop tab has about the same amount of aluminum as the can. Ronald McDonald House organizers store up the donations until they're ready to sell them on the market. The money helps cover costs for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House.

"It's such a small thing that everyone can participate in. Our ability to make a big impact with this was greatly enhanced with such a caring community behind us," she said.

56 H-F High School seniors recognized as Illinois State Scholars

BY CHRONICLE STAFF

Homewood-Flossmoor High School's top students have been named Illinois State Scholars by the Illinois Student Assistance Commission.

The 56 students were chosen based on a combination of ACT/SAT test scores, class rank and class size. These members of the senior class represent ap-

proximately the top 10% of high school seniors from Illinois' 726 high schools.

Honorees are:

Yesenia Adrianzen, Jasmine Alfred, Janet Amuh, Charles Anderson, Jason Bennett, Drew Dingham, Peyton Black, Lucas Bouchie, Kameron Box, Alyssa Brigham, Michael Castady, Amira Clemmons, Michael Coleman, Emmet Conaway.

Oscar de la Torre, Declan Dolan, Kyla Emory, Taree Evans, Audriana Gant, David Gibek, Mark Gislason, William Goldberg, Aria Harrell, Sophia Hinich, Bolden Jones, Charles Knetl, Jeanette Kouassi, Carter Langston, Aaron Latman, Deanna Lawal, Taylor Leslie, Julian Libretti-River, Elanna Lloyd.

Jason Mason, Hannah McGowan,

Ella Michel, Makaela Miller, Rowan Moxley, Nicolette Parrott, Jermouria Randle, Danielle Robinson, Lyric Robinson, Nataleigh Russell, Umar Ryan.

Charlotte Sampson, Samantha Sextonson, Jaden Sharp, Trip Shonkwiler, Samuel Starckenburg, Keisha Toguem, Hailey Walker, Za'Niya Walker, Vivian Werner, Erin Williams, Elizabeth Wojcikowski, Wynton Wright.

Chicago Heights driver services facility reopened on Jan. 25

BY CHRONICLE STAFF

Secretary of State Jesse White announced that the permanent Chicago Heights driver services facility at 570 W. 209th St. has reopened.

The facility has been closed since the summer of 2020 after a fire seriously damaged the building.

"The people of Chicago Heights and the surrounding area deserve to have their permanent facility back in operation," said

White. "While I have been disappointed with the landlord's slow progress of the repairs and renovations to the facility, I am pleased to announce its reopening."

White opened a temporary driver services facility at Prairie State College to continue serving the residents of the South Suburbs while the permanent facility was being repaired and renovated by the landlord.

With the opening of the facility, the temporary Prairie State College facility has been closed.

"I want to thank Prairie State College for its generosity in allowing my office to open a temporary facility on campus to continue serving local residents while the facility was under construction," White said. "I also want to thank Sen. Patrick Joyce, D-Essex, and Rep. Anthony DeLuca, D-Chicago Heights, for their continued support of our efforts to serve the residents of Chicago Heights and the surrounding communities."

White noted the facility will operate as

a walk-in facility. Customers and employees are required to wear masks. Customers are encouraged to bring their own masks.

Sixteen Chicagoland facilities are requiring appointments for behind-the-wheel road tests, REAL IDs, standard driver's licenses and ID cards. Vehicle services, such as renewing a license plate sticker or applying for a vehicle title, do not require an appointment.

More information is available at ilsos.gov.