

Newsday

SEPTEMBER 11, 2009

THE JACKMANS

Family keeps memory alive

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For Barbara Jackman, the foundation she and her family started in memory of her daughter Brooke saved her life.

In the six months following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the mother said, she left her Oyster Bay home for only two reasons: to meet with support groups, and to work on getting the Brooke Jackman Foundation off the ground.

Brooke Jackman was a voracious reader who always had a book in her backpack, her mother said. She enjoyed helping people and volunteered regularly at a soup kitchen and a school for developmentally challenged children.

Though in 2001 she was working as an assistant bond trader at Cantor Fitzgerald in the World Trade Center, Brooke was applying to graduate schools to pursue a master's degree in social work.

The foundation, formed one month after Brooke's death at age 23, melds her passions: It creates and supports programs that enhance the literacy and self-esteem of disadvantaged children and their families.

Through the nonprofit, her mother said, Brooke lives.

"I know that somehow she is with us," said Barbara Jackman, 63.

Erin Jackman, Brooke's sister and the foundation's executive director, said giving children the tools to learn

how to read seemed the best way possible to honor Brooke.

Every year since 2002, the foundation has given away Brooke Packs — each one a backpack filled with school supplies, a new book and audio versions of the book. In earlier years, that meant a Walkman and audiotapes; these days, the backpack holds an MP3 player to play the audio version of the book, which is available for download on the foundation's Web site.

The first year, the foundation gave away 100 Brooke Packs; this year, the packs numbered 2,700.

"All communities may not have the same access to books, so we wanted to give children the same opportunities," said Erin, 36.

The Manhattan-based foundation also has family literacy programs, provides camp scholarships to low-income children and establishes libraries, the latest at the Family Justice Center in downtown Brooklyn.

And on Aug. 28, 2008, what would have been Brooke's 30th birthday, the foundation began a new tradition of giving a book to children in each of its programs on that day.

"Our foundation truly embodies Brooke's spirit," Erin said.

What it doesn't mirror, her mother said, is her humility.

"I don't believe she would want her name out there," Barbara said, "but I think she would be happy that we were helping children."



PHOTO BY JOE EPSTEIN

Erin Jackman oversees foundation named for her sister Brooke, right.