

## Mother and son team put their talents to good use



**By Brock Weir**

Denise Waskul didn't even have time to change her clothes when her father loaded up her and her brother and set off for Yonge Street.

Bound for Oak Ridges, the 14-year-old girl was still wearing her bathing suit when they hopped out of the car just in time to spot Terry Fox working his way up Yonge Street.

Shouting out from the sidelines asking if they could run with the icon of the Marathon of Hope, they were obliged.

'My dad and I were on either side of Terry Fox and I remember his exact words, 'Please don't run so close. If either one of you hit my leg, I can fall.' We made sure we kept our distance. We gave him a \$20 bill and I remember he said he never thought people would get so excited for his project.'

Denise didn't know it at the time, but this chance encounter sowed the seeds of giving back to the community, now joined by her 10 year old son Angel, a Grade 5 student at St. Jerome Catholic School.

The mother-son duo are familiar faces at many community events and initiatives including the Aurora Farmer's Market and at the Aurora Sobeys store where they sell their crafts, including colourful necklaces, and other items to raise money for select community charities.

'Angel makes bird necklaces the colour of each charity,' says Ms. Waskul, pulling an example out of a binder decorated with a photo of Katy Perry wearing sunglasses made especially for her at a Toronto music event.

Angel has been an active member of the Art in the Park initiative, spearheaded every year by local artist Deborah Campo to benefit Kerry's Place autism services and, to date, they have raised over \$1,100 for local groups.

While Ms. Waskul got her start after the Marathon of Hope her father remains an active volunteer and fundraiser for the annual Terry Fox Run her son got his start giving back after he was affected by the Japanese Tsunami. Effected by the stories of children losing their families and their homes, he decided to put his talents to work.

After the disaster, he was invited to join artist Lilian Michiko Blakey in an exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre raising money for Japanese Red Cross relief efforts.

?He just wanted to help children,? explains Denise. ?I don't think he understands the scope of what he's doing and how he is helping put good work out into the community and the Town.?

The duo have also supported AIDS groups in Toronto, focusing their attention on raising enough money to help feed those effected and Angel's work was recently recognized, with his necklaces being specially commissioned by one Toronto-based AIDS group as awards for community volunteers and philanthropists who have lent their time and efforts to the AIDS community.

?I want to instill in Angel that passing joy forward is really important,? she says. ?Playing video games are a great thing to do, but there are times when you have to give back. Fundraising is sometimes difficult when it is done on a mom-son level and there is so much negativity about people lying and taking funds for themselves. Every organization that Angel and I have helped we have been invited to and I think that is an easier way to gain trust in the community.

?Angel is 10 years old and by the time he is 18 and finishes high school I would like to see that his fundraising goal be reached or go more than \$10,000. I hope by the time he is 18 years old this is something he is going to do on his own because he wants to do it on his own.?