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PHOTO AND VIDEO OPPORTUNITIES

The Gift of Life

Kennedy siblings giving back by giving blood; hosting Blood Drive Dec. 16

SOMERS, N.Y. – They say there is no greater gift than that of life. Parents know this better than anyone, the fragility and resurgence of the human existence. That is why Anthony and Anna Torchia are so proud of their son and daughter, who have turned a life-or-death situation from the summer into a life-giving event this Christmas.

Kennedy Catholic will be hosting a blood drive for the New York Blood Center on Friday, Dec. 16, from 3 – 7:30 p.m. The Torchias' goal is to meet the annual need for blood around the holidays. But this story began with a blood-letting.

The morning of June 26 was not unlike any other. Mom and dad were out behind their Ossining home, preparing to host another family barbecue. And everyone is family to the Torchias. Kennedy junior Anthony Torchia had just replaced the grips on his all-terrain vehicle and taken it for a test ride. That's when the morning was broken by a crash and a scream. That's when his sister and certified lifeguard, senior Daniella Torchia, sprung into action.

Grabbing towels from the house, she supported an unconscious Anthony's neck and head. Four skull fractures, four broken ribs, a fractured pelvis, shattered spleen, 14 days of intensive care and, most importantly, four pints of blood later, Anthony was allowed to return home.

A new barbecue was planned, a homecoming for the 16-year-old football player. This one even had team buses, except instead of his teammates, they carried blood—52 pints in all, collected for the New York Blood Center.

Fortunate to have received transfusions as blood is in short supply during the summer, Anthony was happy to pay the gift of life forward. This Christmas, he wants his schoolmates to do the same.

"Somewhere out there is a boy like me," Anthony said, "someone who, because of an accident or unfortunate circumstance, needs blood transfusions to live."

While Anthony knows he cannot stop such accidents from happening, his experiences this past summer have made him confident he can still make a difference, and that means making sure there is an ample supply of blood for the next person in need.

"In reciting the Serenity Prayer, we asked God to help us 'accept the things we cannot change' and the 'courage to change the things we can'," said the Rev. Mark G. Vaillancourt, president and principal of Kennedy Catholic. "Anthony has certainly demonstrated our school virtues of courage and compassion in the wake of his accident."

And therein lies the "wisdom to know the difference", which the Torchias will be making Dec. 16. To sign up, go to www.kennedycatholic.org/category/daily-update and click on the Blood Drive story. For more information on the New York Blood Center, please visit www.nybloodcenter.org.

Named one of the 50-best secondary schools by the Catholic High School Honor Roll in 2005, Kennedy Catholic provides a rigorous, college-preparatory program that seeks the fullest development of mind, body and spirit. Founded as St. Mary's in 1924 by the Sisters of the Divine Compassion and located on 64 scenic acres in Somers, N.Y., Kennedy Catholic offers state-of-the-art technology—SMART Boards, wireless Internet, computer labs and a TV studio—that prepares today's students for tomorrow's world. Home to 52 athletic teams across 17 sports and more than 25 extracurricular activities, there is something for everyone at Kennedy Catholic.