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Elisa, Jake, Clint and Augusta Greenbaum, from left, in their Westhampton Beach home with Mr. Greenbaum holding a copy of former President Bill Clinton's book "Giving." Making Headway, an organization the Greenbaums co-founded to assist the victims of brain and spinal tumors, is featured in the book. PHOTO BY CAROLINE SIMSON

## Family Heals Through Giving

By Caroline Simson

It has been more than 17 years since the Greenbaums almost lost their first child to a brain tumor. But Clint and Elisa Greenbaum, who now live in Westhampton Beach, were one of the lucky families and their son Jake, now 18, is a cancer survivor.

In 1996, the Greenbaums decided to co-found, with Ed and Maya Manley of Chappaqua, whose daughter Cynthia also survived a brain tumor, a new charity called Making Headway. The organization offers financial and counseling assistance to parents who have children suffering from brain and spinal cord tumors.

The goals of the organization, which has provided assistance to more than 1,000 children and raised more than \$5 million to date, are to provide care and comfort to children suffering from brain and spinal cord tumors. The charity, which also donates money to fund medical research, focuses on helping children, and their families, before surgery, during their hospital stays and while they recover at home.

On Sunday, one of the charity's annual fund-raisers will be held at the Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College in Manhattan. The event, called "Break: A

History of Hip Hop," will feature a group of internationally recognized break-dancers. Tickets for the shows, which will be held at 1 and 3 p.m., range from \$75 to \$100 and can be purchased by calling the foundation at (914) 238-8384 or by contacting Mr. Greenbaum at (631) 288-5705 or via e-mail at CGreenbaum@aol.com

Although it serves as a fund-raiser, the event gives young cancer patients, as well as their parents, siblings and caregivers, a few hours to have some fun and forget about their diseases. Therefore, according to the Greenbaums, most people who buy tickets for the event actually then donate them to the charity to allow sick children and their families to attend.

"For a lot of people, it doesn't fit into their schedule, so they donate their tickets to kids who have brain tumors or special needs," said Mr. Greenbaum, who sits on the Westhampton Beach School Board. "At the end of the day, within those two performances, in excess of 90 percent of the tickets are for [the children]."

He added that people are also welcome to donate any amount of money to the organization, which was recently featured in former President Bill Clinton's book "Giving."

For the Greenbaums, Making Headway is a cause that hits home. Although their son Jake is now doing well, the 18-year-old is still unable to speak due to the tumor he had as a child. The Greenbaums also know how difficult it can be for an affected child and his or her family to deal with the illness.

"You [know] the expression that you hear some news where you're literally taken off your feet. That's what it was like," he said of learning that his only son was diagnosed with a brain tumor when he was 3 months old. "I had several other family members who died of cancer, and you think you've paid your dues, but it doesn't always work out that way."

As a result, the Greenbaums have a personal connection to the families of children suffering from these debilitating diseases. One of every three children diagnosed with brain tumors will not survive, according to the Brain Tumor Society, a national non-profit group dedicated to finding a cure for the disease.

But that's a number the Greenbaums would like to change. Part of the foundation's mission is to fund research and increase survival rates. In keeping with that goal, Making Headway recently launched the Pediatric Neuro-Oncology Research Initiative, which funds research programs that are searching for new treatments.

In addition to funding research, Making Headway also finances a number of in-hospital programs at the Hassenfeld Children's Center for Cancer and Blood

Disorders in Manhattan, which is run by New York University Medical Center. The programs include providing a therapeutic clown and a "child life specialist," the latter of whom organizes recreational activities for children.

Maya Manley, an art and music therapist who works at the hospital, said she enjoys helping children take their minds off of their health—at least for a little while.

"They don't feel lost and like sick, sick children," she said. "It's basically a happy day and at night when the children go home, they don't always want to go home."

But perhaps most rewarding for the Greenbaums, the Manleys, and all those who contribute to the organization, is the reactions of the children and their families who are given assistance.

"I don't even know how to say thank you to them," said Joseph Cozzolino, an East Northport resident whose daughter, Natalie, survived a brain tumor two years ago when she was eight. "I don't know what we would have done without the organization."

Mr. Cozzolino noted that he and his wife, Beth, first contacted Making Headway soon after their daughter had surgery to remove the tumor. At that time, the organization offered the Cozzolinos free counseling and put them in touch with an educational specialist who still helps coordinate their daughter's schooling. These days, Natalie is still involved with the organization and last year attended the annual picnic hosted by the Manleys at their home in Chappaqua.

Mr. Cozzolino said the social functions offered by Making Headway allow his daughter to interact with other children suffering from similar illnesses, and help her cope with the aftereffects.

"She can be involved even into her adulthood," he said. "[The organization] has really been invaluable. I think we would have been lost had we not gotten in contact with them."