Creating a Culture of Giving: Case in Point
by Lyn Balistreri, Director of Fund Development

Meet **Gabe**, 13, who has been working on a mitzvah project as part of his seventh grade year and Bar Mitzvah study.

The school he attends happens to be one that, starting in kindergarten, devotes a fair amount of time in its curriculum to serving one’s community. At the beginning of this school year, everyone in Gabe’s class was tasked with identifying an issue of importance, researching nonprofit organizations devoted to addressing that issue, and choosing one for which they would personally advocate and raise money. The project lasts all year and involves writing a long paper and making a presentation in May that focuses on their organization of choice. Gabe decided he wanted to focus on raising awareness of learning disabilities and resources for an organization that supports youth with learning issues.

And we’re pleased to share with you that that organization is Morrissey-Compton.

**All the Right Reasons**

Gabe’s choice stems from his personal experience with learning differences in general and Morrissey-Compton in particular. Gabe was first tested at Morrissey-Compton when he was in second grade, and his mother, **Amy**, says that since then we have been an important part of his educational team, working directly with his school to help inform them of his learning profile and provide input regarding what would help him succeed.

Being diagnosed with a learning difference is a personal and private matter, and it’s understandable that not every individual is comfortable disclosing this information about themselves to others. Amy reports that she and her husband have always made it a point to discuss with their children the fact that there are many people in the world who are not as fortunate as their family, and make them aware of the ways in which they are wealthy that go far beyond net worth. Perhaps this is the reason that from the time Gabe discovered that he had a learning difference, Amy says that he has been “loud and proud” about it, advocating for himself—and others—at his school. The whole family has been very open about sharing their experience, and when they started to recommend Morrissey-Compton to others, Gabe was able to see the difference it’s made in many lives, not just his own.
**Bringing it Home**

We’ve talked before in this newsletter about creating a culture of giving that goes beyond what each household gives monetarily. Now, as a fundraising professional (and one with an annual goal to reach), I feel compelled to ALWAYS put the following qualifier on that point: Our donor dollars are also very important to Morrissey-Compton, so if your personal situation is such that you can afford to make a gift, please do! At the same time, though, we do recognize that not everybody has the means to donate as much or as frequently as they’d like, so with that in mind, we are referring to other ways that the community at large, and each family specifically, can create a culture that incorporates giving into its daily life.

Gabe’s project is a wonderful example of the culture of giving that we’re trying to create at Morrissey-Compton—one that starts at home, and carries out into the rest of the world. We truly appreciate Gabe’s efforts on our behalf, and hope that you find his story as inspirational as we do!