

Craig and Judi Donoff Establish *Chase Donoff After School and Camp Special Needs Scholarship Fund*



Judi and Craig Donoff



The Donoff Family surrounding a photograph of Chase;
(l to r) Lindsey Donoff, Mathew Nemeroff,
Garrett Nemeroff, Judi Donoff and
Craig Donoff.

Nearly 100 family and friends of Craig and Judi Donoff gathered at the Peter Blum Family YMCA recently to launch the *Chase Donoff After School and Camp Special Needs Scholarship Fund*, as tribute to their son, Chase, who passed away unexpectedly last year at age 19.

For more than seven years of his life, Chase Donoff, who had autism, enjoyed participating after school and all summer long at the YMCA of Boca Raton's Exceptional Child Program (ECP). At the time, however, the YMCA did not have an after school program for special needs teens. When Chase turned 13, he had to be taken by bus nearly 45 minutes each way to a program in Lantana. The Donoffs dreamed of a day when these children could remain in their community close to home in a program that they loved.

After Chase's passing, they noticed an article in the newspaper about the YMCA's new teen special needs program and jumped at the chance to help that effort grow.

A well-known Boca Raton and Aventura estate planning attorney, Donoff and his wife, Judi, established the \$250,000 fund because they saw first-hand the need for such programs for young people with special needs and their families.

"When Chase was young, the YMCA was the only organization who would take special needs kids after school and during the summer," he said. "They offered him a place to stay active and get healthy stimulation."

"I want to make a difference with this new fund," added Donoff, who, along with Judi, plans to remain active in the development of the program



(l to r) John Mulhall, president of the YMCA of South Palm Beach County Board of Trustees; Patty Costopoulos, director of the YMCA Boca Raton preschool; and Florida Senator Dave Aronberg (District 27)

and envisions the establishment of a respite care that allows parents of special needs children to take a break and go out for the evening with peace-of-mind.

Special fundraising events will be held throughout the year to help the endowment grow to support expanded programming. During the holiday season, for example, sports memorabilia donated by Donoff will be part of a silent auction in the lobby of the YMCA. "People can purchase holiday gifts and help special need kids at the same time," he explained.

"What a special privilege it is for the YMCA to have a generous family like the Donoffs make such a valuable contribution to our special needs program," said Neal Allen, president and CEO of the YMCA Foundation of South Palm Beach County. "This fund will be instrumental in our ability to meet this critical need in our community."

For more information on how to support the fund, contact Neal Allen at (561) 237-0973 or nallen@ymcaspbc.org or [make an online donation](#).