

NEWS

The Jewel's Ari Gold wants to buy the world a skateboard

Nonprofit leader says board sports give kids good alternative to watching TV

By Edward Graham
LA JOLLA LIGHT

If you want to stop kids from pursuing negative life options, you must provide them with positive ones. So goes the philosophy of La Jolla resident Ari Evan Gold, founder of the Doogood Conservatory, an organization that provides free skateboards to underprivileged youth.

The stated goal of his organization is to provide free skateboards and safety pads at skateboard parks across the country. The organization has been running for a year and a half and currently sponsors programs in 13 locations, including four in San Diego.

When asked what inspired him, Gold said, "The main goals are youth development and crime prevention, getting kids active so they are not sitting around watching TV and becoming overweight or participating in unhealthy activities such as drugs or gangs."

The program currently runs entirely on equipment donations from skateboard companies and monetary contributions from individuals.

Each skateboard park is initially given 20 skateboards and safety pads. Every four months, the parks receive eight to 12 new skateboards, and the old boards are given to the neediest participants, as identified by the di-

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rector of the program at each site.

"There were definitely some liability issues at first," said Gold, "... but that was solved by having monitors at each site who distribute the boards and watch the kids while they skateboard."

So far, the organization has been remarkably successful. Joe Hejl, teen director at the Boys and Girls Club of Chico, said that the skateboard donations have inspired his kids with a spirit of generosity and "left a positive mark on the club, which was felt by all."

A skateboarding magazine called Concussion has described Gold as the Mother Teresa of the skateboarding world, someone who wants to use skateboarding for the betterment of society as a whole.

"I've always wanted to be a philanthropist," Gold said, "but as my dad is not exactly in the Forbes 500, I had to do things a little bit differently."

Gold has used his connections in the skateboarding world to generate sufficient donations of equipment to get the programs running. Other charitable contributions have come in the form of a free Web site and a booth at an industry trade show.

The need for donations may soon become less dire, since Gold recently received funding to hire a non-profit management group. The group will be able to write a grant proposal to garner seed money so that a sustainable budget can be established.



COURTESY

Ari Gold is hoping to provide skateboards to underprivileged kids in San Diego and nationwide.

The money is crucial to meeting the final goal of providing free skateboards at 100 locations nationwide. This works out to roughly 1,200 skateboards a year. At \$130 a board, the

bare minimum budget works out to \$200,000.

Gold is hoping to set up a membership program with different levels of sponsorship entitling the members to a newsletter, T-shirts, and other goods.