

NORTH SHORE

Organization gives skateboards to low-income kids

By Megan Feldman

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The notion of skateboards saving lives may seem unlikely. But Ari Evan Gold, founder of an organization providing free skateboards to low-income families, believes skateboards can reduce teen violence by channeling aggression constructively.

Kids who can skateboard and establish social groups based on the sport, he said, are less likely to join gangs or get in fights.

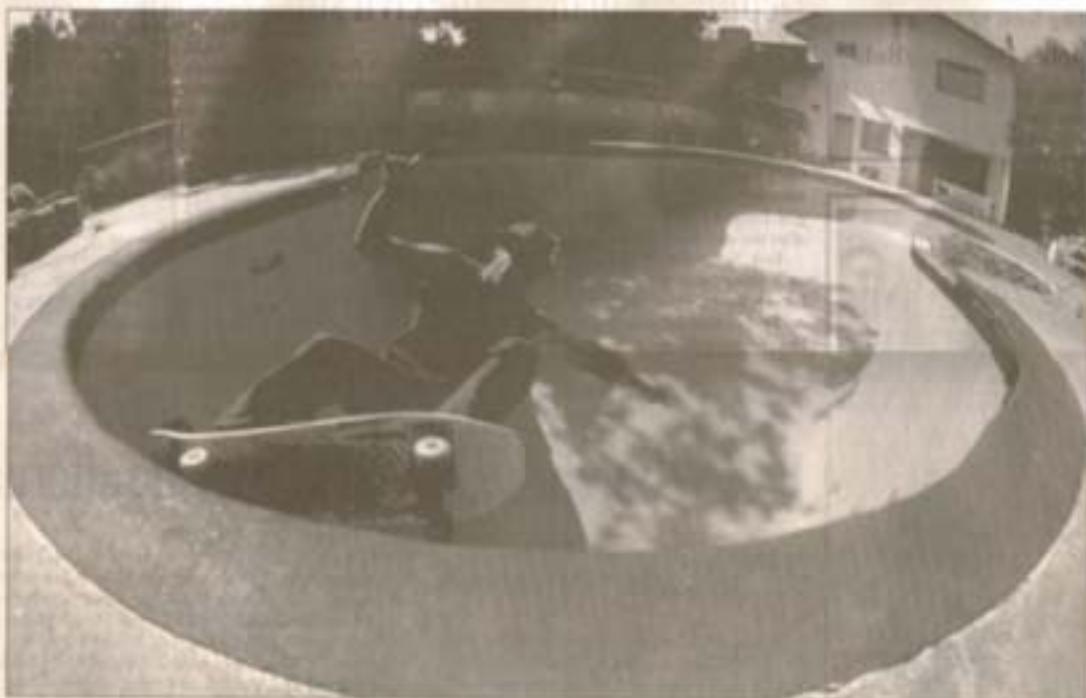
He was one of them.

"Skateboarding saved my life," he said in his West Shore consignment snowboard and ski shop, Trinity, which he's owned for the past nine years. From a troubled family in Tampa, Fla., Evan Gold, 30, said his anger and subsequent fighting increased when he was sent to military school in the seventh grade.

Then he discovered surfing, which led to skateboarding and snowboarding. "I fell in love with the battle against the ocean — you don't hurt anyone," he said. "Through surfing, you can take out your aggression without hurting anybody."

Evan Gold hopes to free skateboarding, snowboarding and surfing from their elitistappings and expand the sports to underprivileged kids, and he's tackling skateboarding first.

He plans to distribute 250 skateboards to underprivileged children in California and Nevada this Christmas



Ari Evan Gold says skateboarding channels aggression constructively. His Doogood Conservatory gives skateboards to kids who can't afford them.

season.

His organization, which he dubbed the Doogood Conservatory — after Rev. Doogood on a De La Soul hip-hop album — distributed 120 skateboard decks to six cities this week.

The Placer County Sheriff's Office helped Evan Gold's group take the boards to organizations such as Toys

for Tots in Reno, Sparks, Tahoe City, Truckee, Auburn and Grass Valley. Twenty more will go to Christmas Cheer in South Lake Tahoe, and Evan Gold said he's sending 20 to the Boys and Girls Clubs in Santa Cruz and Sacramento.

However, the 250 boards he's giving away this month lack wheels, because no com-

pany would donate the parts until the Doogood Conservatory has tax exempt status. He said he's filed for the status, but it could be six months to a year before he gets it.

"I wanted them [the boards] to be complete," he said, but "we'll be in a status until we get that status." When more donations come in, Evan Gold plans to outfit

more boards to give away and distribute to skate parks. Skateboards retail for about \$100-\$130.

"My plan is to do 20 parks on the West Coast, 20 on the East Coast," he said of his goal to provide skate parks with free skateboards kids can check out without having to rent. But until he finishes writing a few grants and

increases the organization's cash flow, he's taking it one project at a time.

Evan Gold is opposed to giving away used skateboards, saying poor kids shouldn't have less than anyone else. "I want them to have as good a board as that rich kid has," he said, recalling that when he was a kid he caught crabs and sold them to buy skate equipment.

The new skateboard deck Doogood is distributing is manufactured by various companies, including Bata Flip and Tony Hawk's company, Birdhouse. They were donated by Blitz Distribution, a skateboard distributor.

Evan Gold said he hopes that giving kids skateboards and eventually making skateboard and surfing equipment available, will help kids who are heading toward destructive activities.

Skateboarding, he said, teaches self-reliance in a way that team sports do not. In addition to fostering self-confidence and a sense of camaraderie among kids who skateboard together.

"I overcame physical pain to accomplish a goal — it instilled self-confidence in me," he said. "I know there's a lot of kids out there who, even if they don't use the board, will give it to a friend who will take away the criminal element in children."

— For more information to send a donation, visit organization's website at doogood.org.

Courtesy Photo