

BOCA TIMES

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Businessman asks shoppers: Will you accept this rose?



By Scott Luxor

Ken Lerman, a Pompano Beach businessman, decided that having loving thoughts about other people just wasn't enough. He needed to find a way to express it in public for everyone to experience.

As if the COVID-19 pandemic wasn't enough to stir fear and division among people, the recent police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the protests that followed was the moment Lerman decided he had to do something.

"I just said to myself: 'How can one human being do that to another human being?'" he said.

Now Lerman shows up at grocery stores, where he's guaranteed to find a variety of people going about their daily activities. Along with a number of cohorts in what he calls love actions, he hands out hundreds of roses to random people and tells them, "I love you!"

Always a believer in love

Lerman said he grew up with the belief, reinforced by his parents, that love was the most important thing in life.

"I've always wanted to have everybody love each other since I was a little kid," he said. "My parents marched in the civil rights movement. I grew up as a middle-class Jewish kid. My parents were just very into love and civil rights and that's what they instilled in me."

Lerman knew that love should really be expressed through actions, not just words, he said.

"I'm from New York, originally. I started a homeless organization there," he said. "I even had a homeless person live with me."

Lerman said he also was inspired by stories and films that talk about love.

"My favorite movie is 'Pay It

Pompano Beach businessman Ken Lerman shows up at grocery stores, where he, along with a number of cohorts, hands out hundreds of roses to random people and tells them "I love you!"

SCOTT LUXOR/SUN SENTINEL

Nonprofit raises funds for kids with special needs, launches virtual programs

By Brett Shweky

Holding its first 7 Day Heads or Tails Challenge virtual fundraiser, the Unicorn Children's Foundation in Boca Raton recently raised \$6,100 in donations for its programs for children and adults with special needs.

Like many organizations, the nonprofit was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing it to go the online route in order to continue collecting funds. Spearheaded by Unicorn Children's Foundation CEO Sharon Alexander, the virtual fundraiser took place from July 25 to 31 with seven winners receiving over \$1,000 in prizes.

"Nonprofits are getting hit really hard," Alexander said. "Historically, many of us [nonprofits] raise the necessary funds to support our programs through special events during the season. We were very fortunate that we got in our main fundraising event of the year a week and a half before we all got shutdown."

"We thought the Heads or Tails Challenge would be interesting," said Alexander, who has been with the nonprofit for 14 years. "It was



UNICORN CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION/COURTESY
Palm Beach County Vice Mayor Robert Weinroth participated in the Unicorn Children's Foundation's 7 Day Heads or Tails Challenge virtual event.

almost no cost. We reached out to some notable members of the community... The event did very well. We raised over \$6,100. But, with virtually no expenses, our return on our

investment was very significant."

The event was kicked off by stand-up comedian and actor Cedric the Entertainer and the foundation revealed the results of the coin tosses each day through its social media accounts and YouTube. Individuals who accomplished guessing the results of the coin toss for seven straight days were selected as the event's winners and also received prizes for their efforts.

First-place winner Angela Fisher donated her winnings, which was a \$500 Amazon gift card, back to the nonprofit in an effort to provide additional support for children and adults with special needs.

"Angela is a parent of a child with special needs," Alexander said. "She finds herself in a fortunate position where she wasn't laid off work, and she just feels blessed that she has the resources to help her child get what he needs to be successful."

"I think it's important for others to realize that there are different acts of generosity," Alexander said. "For her, she didn't have the \$500 when she went into it and she felt that there are others who are in more need of

resources."

For the past 25 years, the foundation has been dedicated to building communities that are acceptant and supportive for individuals who are challenged by special needs and neurodiversity.

In order to supplement school curriculum, the foundation is launching a series of virtual support classes, clubs and workshops this fall. Focus areas include classes for building resiliency, special interest courses, employment supports, extracurricular activities and social opportunities.

Enrollment is underway for courses that launch between Aug. 25 and Sept. 21. The classes will be a series of weekly sessions including mindfulness, introduction to coffee, music, fashion design, job club and jewelry making. The workshops include candle making, soap making and pet care and clubs are learning Spanish and social connection.

Visit unicornchildrensfoundation.org/fall-classes.html for information and to register. Call 561-620-9377 or email info@unicornchildrensfoundation.org.

Visit unicornchildrensfoundation.org/.

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