

NEIGHBORS

Moorpark CEO helps 'set students up for a better future'

By Christina Cox
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The fall semester was a big adjustment for Jeff Brodsky. As a single dad and CEO of Moorpark's The Chosen Group, the 39-year-old found it difficult to juggle his business and his daughter's schoolwork each day.

Brodsky said he tried his best to help his daughter with her lessons, but worried she was not getting the support she needed to succeed in kindergarten and first grade.

"I have been lucky enough in business to be able to afford help with my daughter, yet I am still struggling with being a single father, a CEO working from home, newfound first grade teacher and so much more. I know not all have the same help and resources I have," the Moorpark resident said. "I thought to myself, if I'm struggling with this and feeling very worried for my daughter's pivotal point in education, there has to be so many others that are feeling the same, if not worse."

Instead of feeling defeated, the realization caused Brodsky to spring into action to help other families who feel overwhelmed by the new responsibilities brought on by the pandemic.

"This is when I realized I have to try to make a difference," he said. "All I cared about, and continue to care about, is the ability to help children get the education they would receive if we were not in this crazy time, and children of young ages were not having to learn how to read and write from home."

Brodsky decided to reach out to Moorpark Unified School District Superintendent Kelli Hays to share his willingness to partner with the school district and provide support to students who may have fallen behind due to the challenges of online learning. Together, Hays and Brodsky discussed where his financial contribution could have the greatest impact on some of the district's youngest learners.

"His daughter is a first grader at Walnut Canyon, so we decided to target all first graders who needed help at that school," Hays said.

After finalizing the idea, Brodsky donated \$10,000 to the elementary school to provide first grade students with extended learning opportunities. The additional funding allowed the district to hire an hourly teacher to provide students with biweekly tutoring in language arts, math and basic academic skills.

"These students had been significantly impacted by the current learning environment as a result of COVID-19," Walnut Canyon Principal Theresa Garner said. "The teachers have reported that they have seen academic growth with these students as demonstrated on their grade-level assessment and the basic phonic skills test."

Brodsky, though, knew he wanted to do more.

The Moorpark native understood firsthand how difficult

online learning can be for parents who do not have access to childcare. So he asked MUSD if he could cover the costs for a family to send their children to the before- and after-school programs provided by the Boys & Girls Club of Moorpark and Simi Valley.

"The Walnut Canyon teachers identified a family with three elementary children who had to go to full distance learning because they could not afford to send their children part time to school and pay for childcare," Hays said of the family with students in kindergarten, second grade and third grade.

The donation, school staff said, has helped brighten the students' mood and give them some "much-needed confidence" in their academics.

Brodsky said it was a joy for him to be able to give back to the community and help relieve some

stress for parents and students who are adapting to the academic, financial, mental and emotional challenges brought on by the pandemic.

"If I can change one child's life or one family's life, I feel accomplished," he said. "This will set these children up for a better future, relieve stress on parents and allow for a much better introduction to formal education."

For Brodsky, the donation was just the beginning of his community involvement in public education. The businessman said he hopes to expand his outreach to help students at schools like Walnut Canyon across the country.

"I want to share the concept to not only other Moorpark residents that may be able to help, but to the entire country," he said. "I will personally continue to do what I have here; however, the greater goal is to create a nationwide movement encouraging others to



Courtesy Jeff Brodsky

EDUCATION AID—The Moorpark Unified School District board of trustees recently recognized Moorpark resident and businessman Jeff Brodsky, center front, for his donation that will provide first-grade students with extended learning opportunities.

step up and support youth education and children's mental and emotional stability."

But, as someone born and raised in Moorpark, Brodsky also plans to continue focusing his company's efforts on "the long-term growth and stability" of his own community.

"I feel proud and grateful at the same time. Proud to see the students that need help get it and give them the opportunity to succeed they deserve, and grateful that my own personal success has put me in a position to focus on helping others and our community," he said.

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