

Student gives help a homey feel

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A Poudre High School IB student turned his high school project into a community affair with a Seussical twist after watching a family friend collapse at the ice rink.

Rohan Goel, 16, a sophomore at Poudre, was at a competitive ice-skating event when he watched a mother collapse and be rushed away for medical attention. Right away, neighbors took her two young children into their care while their mother recovered but did not have the know-how to take care of the third child with special needs.

That's when Respite Care, a nonprofit dedicated to serving families with children with special needs, stepped in to care for the young boy.

"Our families, they honestly do feel like we know their kids, and they don't worry about them when they're here," said Sherry Pelton, executive director of Respite Care.

Respite Care serves 130 families in Larimer County and receives its funding from local donations and a sliding-scale fee used for children using Respite Care. No family, however, is turned away because of their finances.

The nonprofit provides before- and after-school care, emergency care and vacation care for people from birth to 21 who have special needs.

Touched by the family's story and Respite's Care need, Goel decided to turn his 10th-grade IB project into a project to benefit Respite Care.

"I really wanted to help kids in the community because the community benefited me so much as a kid," Goel said.

With a love of architecture, Goel decided to design and build a giant, Dr. Seuss-inspired playhouse, which will be raffled off in June. All proceeds will go to benefit Respite Care.

Decked out in vivacious paint colors, the one-room playhouse is a dreamland for young children complete with a mini sofa, wardrobe and even working electricity.

Recycled materials comprise 30 to 40 percent of the house, as Goel said he wanted to think of the environment

when creating the house. Many of the materials for the play house were donated by Fort Collins-area businesses.

Goel has spent more than 150 hours on the school project to plan and design the zany, sustainable home.

"It has really taught me how, as a 16-year-old, I could make a difference in the community," Goel said.

Want to help?

Purchase raffle tickets by calling Respite Care at 207- 9435. The playhouse will be on display at Respite Care's annual fundraising breakfast from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. Thursday at the Hilton, 425 W. Prospect Road. The breakfast is free and open to the public, but reservations are required. Call 207-9435 for reservations.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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