



# GIVING FEELS GOOD

Isaac Lane Ipsan is a 12-year-old boy with a generous heart.  
A boy who thinks of others more than himself.

A boy who celebrates his birthday by giving gifts to others. A boy who is just the right role model for the next generation of givers.

Like a lot of youths his age, Isaac often spends his free time on his phone or playing video games. But, unlike most people his age, Isaac also is focused on volunteering as much as he can, explaining, "I just want to make others' lives as good as they can be."

The Regis Middle School student contributed almost triple the number of community service hours required by his school this year and received the 2013 Outstanding Youth Volunteer of the Year Award through United Way

(he was nominated by one of his favorite non-profits, Young Parents Network [YPN]). Beginning at age 5, the Ipsans became very involved with YPN. Isaac has served meals, helped at their annual Christmas parties, acted as one of the emcees at Broadway Maybies (YPN's annual fundraising talent show), and has helped with the agency's We Care Shop (located in Mercy's Sister Mary Lawrence

Community Center). Isaac also asks his friends to donate a toy to the YPN Christmas party instead of bringing him a birthday gift (his birthday is Dec. 3).

Isaac says, "I started giving back at a young age. It just makes your heart feel really good. I don't even remember when I first started — and I have a good memory!"

He inherited the "giving gene" from his parents, Rachel and Mark Ipsan. That inherited trait blossomed the day he was born — literally. When Rachel was pregnant with Isaac 12 years ago, she and Mark knew they wanted their baby born at Mercy

Medical Center — just like they both were. So, when Rachel went into labor, Mark brought her to Mercy. A speedy delivery followed, but Isaac had swallowed amniotic fluid from within the womb and was not breathing. He was whisked away to Mercy's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and was there nearly two weeks due to low blood sugar, low body temperatures and jaundice.

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*Isaac Ipsan*

GRATEFUL FOR THE SPECIAL CARE ISAAC (NOW 12) RECEIVED AS A NEWBORN IN MERCY'S NICU, RACHEL AND MARK ENCOURAGE HIM TO PARTICIPATE IN OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE THROUGH MERCY, IN ADDITION TO OTHER AREA ORGANIZATIONS.

The NICU physician had a hunch Isaac's symptoms were related to his thyroid and referred the Ipsans to an endocrinologist at University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. Within two weeks of Isaac's birth, he was diagnosed with hypopituitarism, a condition affecting his pituitary gland and thyroid. His body wasn't receiving the signals it needed to grow. Because it was recognized so promptly, Isaac was able to receive treatments sooner than most children with the condition.

Out of gratefulness for the high-quality care Isaac received at Mercy's NICU, Rachel and Mark started a tradition of giving back even before Isaac was aware of it. Rachel explains, "We had his first birthday party and invited both sides of the family (that's a lot of people!). We asked them to donate money instead of giving a birthday present. We do that every year now. Then, Isaac and I visit the Angel Tree at Mercy and pick names of kids. We use the money to buy and donate toys." The Angel Tree is an annual program supported through the Mercy Auxiliary.

"Wanting to give back started very early for me," says Rachel. "I'm one of eight kids and my parents instilled that very important value. Because of Mercy and Isaac's early diagnosis, we felt incredibly blessed and filled with gratitude, and wanted to figure out a way to show our appreciation."

Mark notes that other members of their families now often do the same thing for their children's birthdays. He says, "Our hope is that this continues through the generations. It will be great to see more and more kids pay it forward."

Together, Mark and Rachel have raised a son who understands the joy of giving. It really is better to give than receive — just ask Isaac.



To learn more about giving to Mercy, visit [www.mercycare.org/ways-to-give](http://www.mercycare.org/ways-to-give).

