

Victim of theft, youngster to start bike donation program

By **LISA TALLYN**
Staff Writer

A Georgetown family is overwhelmed by the kindness of area residents who responded so generously after a nine-year-old boy's bike was stolen.

Hayden Downes-Mills was heartbroken when the BMX bike he got for his birthday in March was taken from his yard Sunday (Oct. 3)

With some help from his mom Katie, Hayden sent a letter to *The Independent & Free Press*, that was published Oct. 7, pleading for the return of his bike.

"I'm very upset that my bike was taken and I would like to ask the person who took it to return it to my home," wrote Hayden in his letter. "I really want it back, and I don't know when we can afford to buy a new one."

"If you stole it because you couldn't get your own you could ask your parents to save the money like mine did, or go to Wastewise and get a used one. You didn't need to take my first bike from me. I was going to give it to my little brother when he's older."

The thief did not return his bike, but Hayden's letter touched

a lot of people.

Katie said they have been "overwhelmed, pleased and thankful" by the response they have received from people who wanted to help her son.

After hearing about the bike being stolen a neighbour brought Hayden his grandson's bike that he had outgrown. Another man offered a bike, another man scoured the area looking for Hayden's bike, a couple donated money for a new bike, another man showed up at their home on Thanksgiving with a brand new bike for Hayden. Canadian Tire in Georgetown also donated a new bike to Hayden.

Katie said another man, from Acton, "went above and beyond the call for Hayden."

She said the intention of the letter was only to get the thief to return the bike, not to have anyone give Hayden another bike.

"Everyone's kindness and generosity was more than anyone could have imagined," said Katie. "It taught Hayden we live in a very good community."

"I'm happy that everyone is caring for me," said a thankful Hayden.

Last Thursday Paul Petersen found Hayden's damaged bike in

a dumpster in town. He brought it to the Georgetown police station.

Petersen had already decided he was going to donate his daughter's BMX bike to Hayden and had taken it to Ollie's Cycle and Ski who did a tune-up on the bike at no charge. Petersen gave Hayden the new bike at the police station when he came to pick up what was left of his bike.

"The bike was destroyed beyond repair. The only thing in one piece was the reflector," said Katie.

Hayden was devastated when he saw his bike, and had a hard time sleeping that night.

Hayden has accepted the new bike from Canadian Tire, and because he's been given so much over the past couple of weeks he wants to give back to the community. He's decided to donate all the other bikes and money he's received to kids in town who need a bike but can't afford one.

He's contacted school principals to find out who those children are.

He's taking it one step further; planning to start a bike recycling business providing used bikes to kids who don't have bikes.

He asks anyone who has an



Paul Petersen and Hayden Downes-Mills, 9, pose with Hayden's damaged stolen bike and a replacement one offered by Petersen. Hayden's recent letter to this newspaper sparked an outpouring of offers for new and used bikes, prompting the youngster to start a bike donation program.

Photo by Lisa Tallyn

old bike they don't need to bring it to him. His plan is to paint and repair the bikes with the help of his dad, then turn them over to

the children in need.

Anyone interested in donating a bike can contact Hayden at 905-873-4417.

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12PM TO 7PM

SATURDAY OCTOBER 23

10AM TO 6PM

SUNDAY OCTOBER 24

10AM TO 5PM



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