Sam Prince was born with multiple congenital heart defects that kept him from engaging in the usual joys of childhood—riding a bike, frolicking at the playground, even walking up stairs. He spent time in isolation because of a weak immune system. He desperately needed a new heart.

Thankfully, at age 8, Sam, a North Caldwell resident, received the call he so needed: a match was located. Sam received a life-saving heart transplant on March 14, 2011, at Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital at NewYork-Presbyterian. “It was a fabulous gift. It saved my life,” Sam says.

Sam was finally free to live the life of a first-grader and enjoy every day activities his new heart gave him—including, and especially, giving back to others.

Since then he has dedicated his life to doing just that. He has raised more than $3,000 selling lemonade at Sam’s Lemon-Aid Stand at Gould School in North Caldwell, and he participated for the eighth year in NJ Sharing Network’s 5K Celebration of Life with “Max’s Mitzvah Movers,” a team created by big brother Max in Sam’s honor as his Bar Mitzvah project in 2012. The team has raised more than $60,000 for NJ Sharing Network, money that has increased the number of lives saved through innovative transplant research, family support, public awareness and education about the life-saving benefits of organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

Sam has many people to thank for his new heart and his ongoing support—most important, his donor and his donor family. “Words just can’t describe how thankful I am for that,” Sam says. He also is grateful to Max, his parents Mitch and Debbie, and the family’s synagogue, Congregation Agudath Israel in Caldwell. Max dedicated himself to “spreading organ donation awareness so that those who are waiting for a transplant have the opportunity to go on and live a healthy and fulfilled life as Sam does.”

There will be no better platform for spreading that awareness and sharing Sam’s story than at the 2020 Donate Life Transplant Games, where Sam and many other heart and organ recipients will come together to compete and show the world how powerful the gift of life can be.