

Cambridge father gives back with a groove

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CAMBRIDGE - Entertaining is what these cool cats do best and on Friday, May 2, at the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston, the Tough Love Trio will be setting the groove at the annual fundraising gala for the Federation for Children with Special Needs. The Trio is donating their performance for the evening, thanks to father and bass player, Blake Newman. Newman has a child with special needs and has turned to the Federation on many occasions for guidance and support.

In 2000, Newman, and his wife Anya, gave birth to their first child, Sebastian. Maternal instinct told Anya that something was different about Sebastian, but his pediatrician was unconvinced; he was progressing on track, and showing no signs of any developmental delays. At nine-months-old, the Newman's insisted on having Sebastian seen by a specialist. They took him to Children's Hospital, where Dr. Alan Crocker diagnosed Sebastian with Down syndrome.

"Our heads were spinning," says Newman. "As first time parents, we already had so many questions, and now it felt like we were starting over."

Dr. Crocker provided the Newman's with information, contacts and resources, and highly recommended the Federation for Children with Special Needs for additional support.

"The Federation was one of the first places we called," says Newman. "They helped get us in touch with early intervention specialists, file paper work and answer some really tough questions. It was so comforting to know that we could call them anytime for experienced help, because most of the people who answered the phone had been there themselves."

Sebastian is now eight-years-old, attending the Haggerty School in Cambridge and is doing well. The Newman's have since added on two additions to the family, Dylan, who is six-years old and Zephyr, who is two. Newman says that all three of his children are musically inclined, especially Sebastian who is a huge Bob Marley fan and an exceptional break-dancer.

The Tough Love Trio is comprised of bassist Blake Newman, of Cambridge, percussionist, Steve Chaggaris, of Malden and guitarist Mike Mele, of Lynn. The trio is active in the Boston Jazz scene and their repertoire consists of standard and contemporary jazz. Individually they have recorded and performed internationally with a wide array of diverse artists, and have appeared on numerous radio and television programs.

“We are very excited to have the Tough Love Trio perform at this year’s gala and are grateful to them for volunteering their time,” says Rich Robison, executive director of the Federation for Children with Special Needs. “We know their performance is going to be a huge hit with our gala attendants.”