

## STORY 4: VIJAY - Caucasian, Age 30

### VIJAY:

Hi I'm Jason and I live in New Jersey. So a week before Christmas, I'm driving my kids around ... Dev is 4 and Sruthi is 6... and the trunk of the car is full of blankets. And Dev says: Why are we driving around with all these blankets? So I explain that this is a project for Sruthi's pre-school class at the Y. They all collected blankets and now we're dropping them off at a shelter. So Dev wants to know: Why are we dropping them off at a shelter? So I start to explain about homelessness and then Sruthi jumps in. She says, *"because it's the right thing to do."*

And the reason she knows it's the right thing to do is thanks to the Y. Three days a week, the kids go to the Y's Early Childhood Learning Center. And there is a program there that teaches my kids the language of giving... she learns vocabulary like charity, community, generosity, philanthropy. They talk about these things in a way that makes it real to her... not just my wife and I telling her to do something.

And then the kids go to a Senior Living Center to play games or sing songs. Or they clean up at a park. Or they make cards for sick kids. Or collect stuffed animals. They teach the kids that charity means giving. That giving is the right thing to do. And the Y is a charity.

Obviously my wife and I want to teach our kids to be good citizens. But we had no idea that you could teach this mindset... this spirit of generosity... so early in life. Are they too young? Consider this: A week after the blanket conversation, it is Christmas day and Dev hands me a stuffed toy. A little dog. He says, "I have a lot of stuffed animals. I want to give this to a kid who didn't get toys for Christmas." Never too young. The Y taught us that.