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Master of cubism

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Andy Camann can solve a Rubik's Cube in under 15 seconds, but he'd never come close to the record he set on Sunday at the Highland's Village Day.

The Waban resident collected over \$2,500 for charity as part of a two-hour live demonstration of cubing that featured the 17-year-old South junior solving exactly 300 cubes.

With 20 minutes left of the two hours, Camann, a world champion cuber, had already passed his goal of 240. Camann averaged 24 seconds to solve each cube, and he only took one water break during the two hours.

"This is fun," Camann said during an interview conducted while his hands twisted the cube. "It definitely is a lot of work."

To solve a cube, it can require anywhere from 35 to 60 turns, but Camann said he only sees the face of the cube as patterns.

"I try not to look up," Camann said in reference to the crowds of children and adults that swarmed his booth at Village Day.

As a testament to his concentration, Camann said he hadn't noticed the live band across the street until asked about what was going on around him.

Camann's ability to recognize and memorize patterns helps him beyond raising money for charity.

"In school I can memorize 20 words in about two minutes," Camann said. "Everyone has a potential to solve a cube. Under 14 seconds takes a new level of skill and dedication that not many people have."

Unofficially, Camann's fastest time is around 9 seconds - the official world record belongs to Leyan Lo, clocked at 11.13 seconds in a 2006 competition. Last fall, Camann placed 11th out of 150 competitors for fastest time. He didn't participate in other cubing races, solving the cube one-handed or blind-folded or even hands-free (feet only).

But, for Camann, who has dedicated many hours to cubing, Sunday's show was rewarding on a new level.

"I can solve cubes any day, but it's not every day that I can raise money for a foundation," Camann said.

The money he raised went to the Matty Eappen Foundation, named after an 8-month-old who died in 1997 at the hands of British au pair Louise Woodward. Debbie Eappen, Matty's mother and a former Newton Highlands resident, was in awe as she watched Camann speed through cubes.

"There must be something very special in his brain," Eappen said.

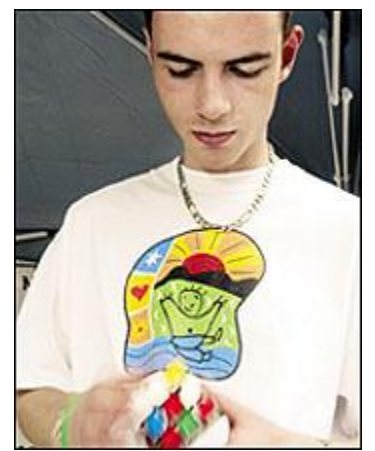
Outside his cubing powers, Eappen said Camann is a special person.

"You don't meet too many 17-year-olds with that kind of altruism," she said.

The \$2,500 that Camann raised for the foundation will help the organization's several different programs. One such project underway is working to educate medical staff in emergency rooms to diagnose babies with shaken baby syndrome, said Eappen.

Also, the foundation hopes to implement a program to educate parents of newborns about the dangers of shaking a baby.

For more information about the Matty Eappen Foundation visit www.mattyeappen.org. For more information about Andy Camann's Rubik's Cube feats, visit his Web site at www.andyscubepage.tk.



Andy Camann raised over \$2,500 for the Matty Eappen Foundation by solving 300 Rubik's Cubes in two hours at Sunday's Highlands Village Day. (Staff Photo By David Gordon)