

The Official Magazine of USA Volleyball

# Volleyball USA

Winter 2006



## Mission Possible

Taylor Crabtree is setting her sights on a bright future, where she is determined to bring a ray of hope to children worldwide.



# MISSION

By Bill Kauffman

# POSSIBLE

**Taylor Crabtree seems like the typical 16-year-old. She is busy with schoolwork consisting of four Advanced Placement classes and one honors-level course, plays setter on her high school varsity volleyball team and has a job on the side.**

But nothing about Taylor is typical, as she has earned volleyball honors within USA Volleyball and has enriched the lives of so many through a company she founded at the age of 7.

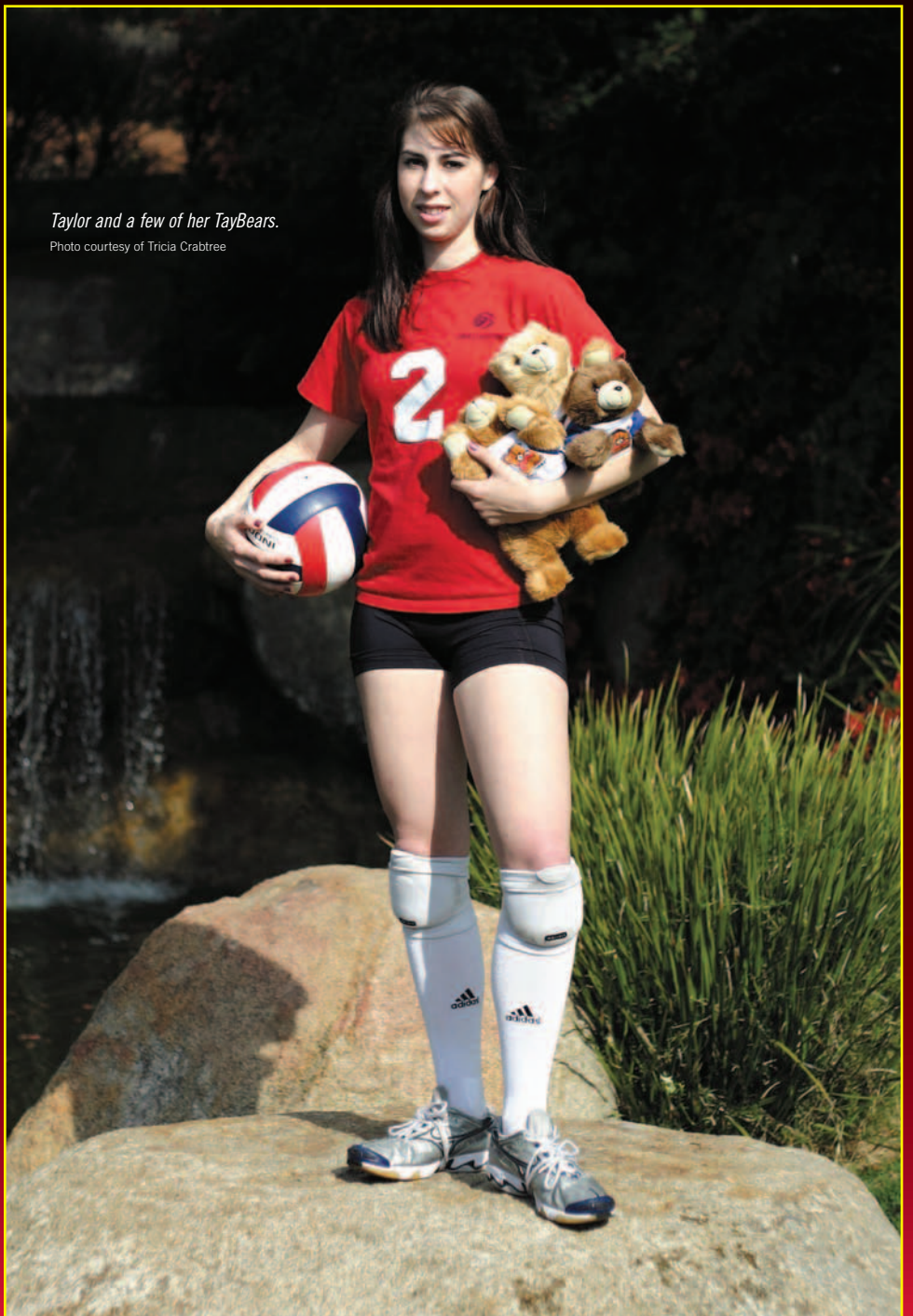
As for volleyball, Taylor has earned two gold medals while representing the Southern California Volleyball Association (SCVA) at the USA Volleyball High Performance Championships. She earned the most valuable player honor at the 2004 event in Austin, Texas, as she set SCVA to the championship. Taylor also paced SCVA to the same tournament championship in 2006 at Fort Lauderdale, Fla. As a result of the team victory, she was invited to attend the 2006 USA Volleyball Youth National Holiday Camp in Pomona, Calif. This talented setter also trained at the USAV High Performance Training Camps in 2005 and 2006 and the 2005 Youth National Holiday Camp in Austin, Texas.

"The High Performance Program opened my eyes to a much higher level of volleyball," Taylor explained.

To stay on top of her game, she trains four times a week during season and six days a week out-of-season with a personal trainer, Trent Suzuki. Taylor has benefited from the advanced tutelage, and recently committed to compete for the SoCal 18s Junior Volleyball Club within the SCVA and is coached by Tom Ranney.

"Taylor is just one of those exceptional children both on and off the court," said Paula Weishoff, a three-time U.S. Olympian and Taylor's High Performance coach for two years in a written statement on Taylor's web site. "She is the type of kid that will go to physical training in the morning, come early to afternoon practice, and then want to play in the evening. Taylor is the first to encourage her teammates and will blame herself first before ever putting blame on another player or coach."

However, volleyball and her educational aptitude are only a fraction of what makes this teenager stand out from the crowd.



*Taylor and a few of her TayBears.*

Photo courtesy of Tricia Crabtree

What started out as an entrepreneurial business in 1997 when Taylor was only a second grader blossomed quickly into a philanthropic project reaching the hearts and souls of millions now that she is a high school junior at Rancho Buena Vista High School in Vista, Calif.

But Taylor is not your ordinary lemonade stand businesswoman; rather, her “kid-owned, non-profit company” TayBear has bettered the lives of more than 22,000 sick children all over the United States. At the same time, her message has reached millions in the United States and beyond through the Internet.

Taylor’s mission is simple, as laid out on her website [www.taybear.com](http://www.taybear.com). Her first goal for TayBear is to give teddy bears to children with cancer and blood diseases all over the United States. The second goal for TayBear is to have lots of children become part of the project of helping other children. As she states on her web site, “I have always been taught that everyone

(even children) should look for ways to help others.”

The business formed in October 1997 as Taylor watched her grandmother suffer the effects of cancer. She and her mom were making hair clips to wear at gymnastics when the idea of selling them touched off the entire TayBear campaign.

“I first heard about police officers carrying teddy bears to help traumatized children in accidents,” Taylor described as to why she chose the stuffed animals. “I thought if it could help a child in an accident, why couldn’t it help hospitalized children? And I always had a fascination with teddy bears.”

As a business-savvy 7-year-old, she started selling the customized hair clips to people at school and in local businesses. Soon, the young entrepreneur had enough money saved up to make her first five TayBear purchases to give away to sick children fighting cancer similar to that her grandmother braved.

Taylor and former U.S. Women’s National Team Head Coach Toshi Yoshida.

Photos courtesy of Tricia Crabtree.



“She is the type of kid that will go to physical training in the morning, come early to afternoon practice, and then want to play in the evening.”



Taylor presents in front of 14,000 people at the Million Dollar Round Table.

Taylor’s passionate business at a young age caught the attention of a local bank in California. Shortly after forming the enterprise in 1997, she and TayBear were featured in a television commercial for the bank with the slogan “We help even the little businesses.”

At first, Taylor was alone in the venture, as the original goal was only to distribute 50 TayBears. But after her friends recognized her vision they, too, volunteered to help and the project exploded in scope. After that, children she did not even know started to ask to help.

TayBear now includes a network of 1,600 volunteers – all youngsters – who have helped with the project and has truly made TayBear into a “Children Helping Children” movement. The volunteers donate time to help at “painting parties” in creating the hair clips, stamping the cards that go with the TayBears, folding the fabric, giving each TayBear individualized treatment such as providing it a unique name and a pre-hug before shipment, or even selling the hair clips to produce revenue to purchase additional TayBears.

“It’s because of all the kids that have helped me that together we’ve made TayBear really from one kid to another,” Taylor states on her web site.

A few of Taylor’s current high school volleyball teammates have even joined in the process of TayBear. The smooth transition from La Costa Canyon High School, her former school, to Rancho Buena Vista

# MISSION POSSIBLE

High School played a key part in her acceptance and spreading the TayBear word.

"It was so much easier changing schools because when I went to tryouts, I discovered that three of the girls on my team had already been TayBear helpers years ago," Taylor said. "I felt very welcomed."

And that early acceptance has made for a fun junior year.

"This was my first year at Rancho Buena Vista High School, and it was really fun," Taylor said. "Everybody was very welcoming, and we had a great coach (LeAnne DeBora)."

With the foresight as to how far-reaching TayBears can be, Taylor has learned not to limit the goals for the organization. She spends approximately 10 hours a week on the project, mostly at night and on weekends around a crowded schedule of honors courses and volleyball.

"I first started with a goal of only giving out 50 TayBears," she explained. "As I gave out more TayBears and more people got involved, I kind of learned not to limit my goals by setting them too low."

Along the way, she garnered enough knowledge of business and accounting at a young age to help make the business succeed and developed practical experience that few children achieve. Taylor, who has even learned some bookkeeping from a computer program to better control her money, has a core group of community business leaders and mentors that she can rely on, asking best business practice questions, along with using her parents as a sounding board for advice.

Taylor also learned the art of negotiation in the infancy of TayBear. She arrived at a deal with Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop, that secured teddy bears for a great price.

Uncomfortable being called a hero and bathed in the spotlight, Taylor's list of recognitions has grown over the years for her TayBear project. She recently was named one of *People* magazine's five "Heroes Among Us" and was spotlighted in the publication's Nov. 6, 2006, issue. She was also featured on CBS-TV's "The Early Show" program on Nov. 1, 2006.

Upon hearing of TayBear through *People* magazine, one lady who owned a stuffed bear company donated 500 bears to the TayBear project so that 500 children would have a bear to hug in a time of need. The media coverage also sparked an increase in Taylor's e-mail inbox, as 400 messages arrived shortly after the issue was released.

"I was shocked when (*People* and "The Early Show") contacted me," Taylor said. "I had no idea they even heard what I did. They have helped so much with exposure."

Taylor's other achievements include selection as an Ambassador for the Millennium Dreamers, a one-time event sponsored by Disney that selected 1,000 children in the U.S. and 2,000 worldwide for the honor. California politicians have also recognized Taylor and her mission. California State Senator Bill Cravens presented her the Certificate of Recognition, while United States Congressman Ron Packard gave her the Certificate of Appreciation. In addition, the date Feb. 19, 1998, was declared as Taylor Crabtree Day in Vista, Calif.



Photos courtesy of Tricia Crabtree.



On behalf of TayBear, Taylor has given speeches to local civic organizations, schools and churches to promote her company and mission. Among her most memorable moments was making a presentation as a 14-year-old in front of 14,000 people (and translated into 19 languages) at the Million Dollar Round Table (MDRT), which is a worldwide convention. Her moving speech prompted the attendees to sell out her inventory of 5,000 hair clips in fewer than four hours.

As an 8-year-old, Taylor was a staff member of The March on Cancer that took place in September 1998 in Washington, D.C., and was in charge of the "WALL of Courage." She gave a speech during a candlelight vigil ceremony in front of the Lincoln Memorial during The March on Cancer that had tens of thousands of supporters. In the process, she met General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, who was the chairman of the march.



Photos courtesy of Tricia Crabtree.

**“People sometimes wonder why I’ve been doing TayBear for so long; it’s because of the children that I’ve met. How can I not help?”**

“It is hard to believe that an 8-year-old was given that much responsibility looking back,” Taylor said. “The WALL was set up on the Mall in Washington, D.C., for children that were fighting cancer to write or draw their hopes and dreams upon. I brought with me thousands of paper teddy bears and crayons for them to use to color and write on. I helped the really little children and talked with the older ones. It was an amazing experience to meet so many children literally fighting for their lives. Many came up in wheel chairs with IVs or with a leg missing or with large scars. Everyone was there to feel courage and strength from the event.”



# Do the Math

**Senoh volleyball net systems last 30 years or more... That's real value.**

Offered only by Sports Imports, and backed by an unmatched equipment warranty, Senoh net systems are the most durable and easy-to-use on the market, making them the best value for your team and facility.

Since 1976, we have installed more than 17,000 Senoh net systems across the country. Senoh, the only system ever used by the Olympics, is also endorsed by the AVCA, and the FIVB and used in the NCAA tournaments.

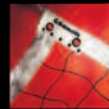
Call us today to experience the real value of Senoh volleyball net systems.

**Senoh value for a lifetime of play.**



**SPORTS IMPORTS**  
*your source for Senoh*

800-556-3198  
[www.sportsimports.com](http://www.sportsimports.com)



**SPORTS IMPORTS**  
*your source for Senoh*



Now the Exclusive Distributor of the **Sports Attack Volleyball Machines**

© 2005 Sports Imports

# MISSION POSSIBLE

People sometimes wonder why I've been doing TayBear for so long; it's because of the children that I've met. How can I not help?"

Taylor, though, does more than simply make speeches, sell hair clips and return the profits in the form of TayBears to sick children. When time permits, she has presented the TayBears in person to sick children at hospitals in several states.

Along with all other businesses, Taylor's is not without complications. TayBear has been so successful in selling hair clips and purchasing the teddy bears that Taylor does not always have all the resources needed to forward the stuffed animals to hospitalized children. At times she is looking for donations to deliver the teddy bears to hospitals. Right before Thanksgiving 2006, she had another problem to deal with after sending out 79 boxes with a total of 1,896 huggable teddy bears destined to brighten the spirits of ill patients.

"Right now, I am a little worried," Taylor said right before Thanksgiving. "Soon I'll need to pay for an order for 3,000 more TayBears. I'm talking with Build-A-Bear on Monday morning to place a new order. I'll be taking delivery on them in February and I need \$15,000 before then. So I do need as much help as I can get."

As she sees it, one of the biggest problems she faces is the balance between receiving and sending.

"The balance between buying and shipping is a complication that I face," Taylor said. "One year it may be buying, followed by shipping after that. But the shipping has to be the most frustrating. I hate to see thousands of bears ready for shipment, but can't get them out to the hospitals because funds are lacking to send them."

Some of those problems have been alleviated following the *People* magazine article. A nationwide shipping company has offered to pick up and send 1,896 bears out to hospitals that have been stored at Taylor's home.

All told, TayBear has received more than \$130,000 from selling hairclips at \$2.50 each, along with donations, and has handed out more than 22,000 TayBears. She even received a \$10,000 one-time donation from an individual at a Young Entrepreneur Organization (YEO) meeting five years ago to further the cause. But more work needs to be done.

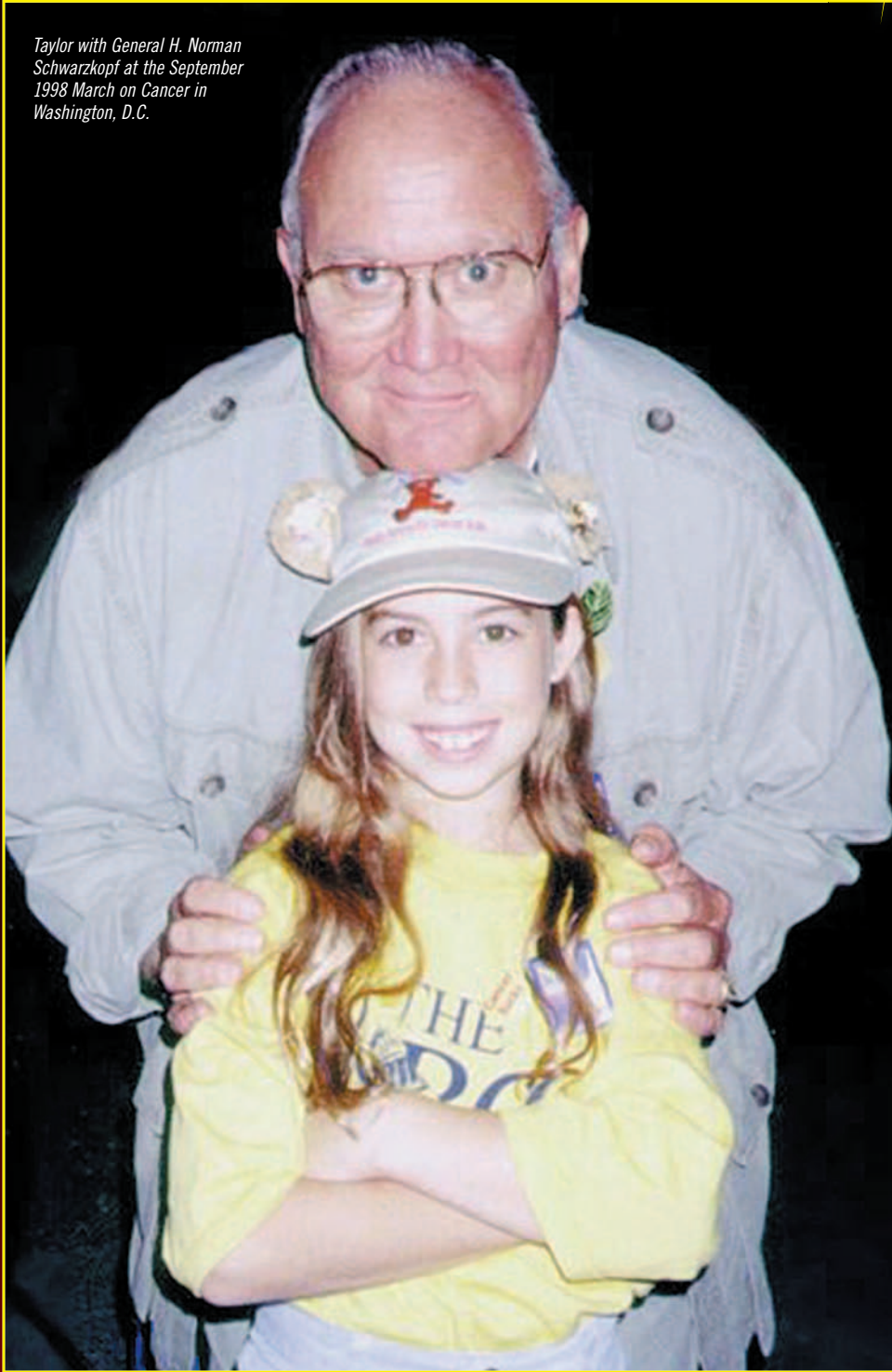
"No matter how many bears I send out, I know more children need one," Taylor said. "That helps me keep going."

Taylor is more than two-thirds of the way to her goal of handing out 30,000 teddy bears to hospitalized children before leaving for college. Individuals can make donations to TayBear by sending checks to 993 South Santa Fe Ave #C339, Vista, CA 92084. On-line donations can also be made through Taylor's web site at [www.taybear.com/donations.htm](http://www.taybear.com/donations.htm).

Even after the current goal of 30,000 TayBears distributed before Taylor goes to college is reached, she wants to keep it in her life.

"I want to push it past college," Taylor commented. "I don't see why it should stop after going to college. I just want it to continue and help as many children as possible. I want to keep TayBear in my life."

Taylor with General H. Norman Schwarzkopf at the September 1998 March on Cancer in Washington, D.C.



As one might guess, business is in Taylor's college plans.

"I definitely want to go into business, whether as a major or minor," she said. "I am not sure what kind of career I want, but I want to go to a college with very high academics and a strong volleyball program."

Taylor's message carried by her involvement with TayBear holds a personal accountability to be involved within the community.

"People put so many limitations on themselves, and that may be the reason why more people do not get involved," Taylor lamented. "Just knowing I can make a difference in people's lives, that one person can make a difference, keeps me going." **VbUSA**