

# Biography Today

Volume 16 — No. 1

**Drake Bell**.....actor, musician, & co-star of the Nickelodeon TV series "Drake & Josh"

**Taylor Crabtree**.....founder & owner of Ty/Bear Company, which provides free teddy bears to sick children

**Roger Federer**.....professional tennis player & winner of nine grand slam titles

**June Foray**.....voice actor behind Rocket, J. Squirrel and other popular animated characters

**Alicia Keys**.....singer, composer, pianist, & winner of nine Grammy Awards

**Cheyenne Kimball**.....singer & star of the MTV reality series "Cheyenne"

**Barack Obama**.....political leader & U.S. senator from Illinois

**Soledad O'Brien**.....journalist & co-host of CNN's "American Morning"

**Skip Palenik**.....forensic microscope scientist

**Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez**.....professional baseball player with the Detroit Tigers

**Rob Thomas**.....author, television writer, producer, & creator of the TV series "Veronica Mars"

**Ashley Tisdale**.....actress, singer, & star of "The Suite Life of Zack & Cody" and *High School Musical*

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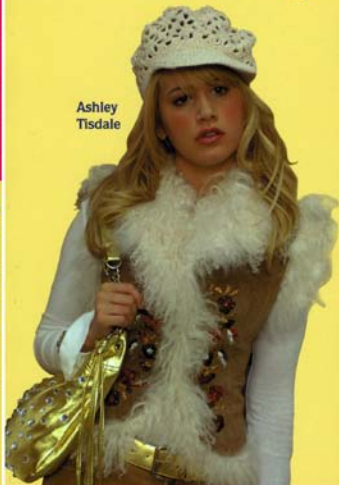
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General Series

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Biography Today

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Ashley  
Tisdale



Barack Obama



Soledad O'Brien



Drake Bell

FEATURING . . . Drake Bell, Taylor Crabtree, Roger Federer, June Foray, Alicia Keys, Cheyenne Kimball, Barack Obama, Soledad O'Brien, Skip Palenik, Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez, Rob Thomas, and Ashley Tisdale



## **BRIEF ENTRY**

### **Taylor Crabtree 1990-**

American Student and Charitable Entrepreneur  
Founder and Owner of TayBear Company, which  
Provides Free Teddy Bears to Sick Children

### **EARLY YEARS**

Taylor Marie Crabtree was born on September 20, 1990, in San Diego, California. Her father, Ken Crabtree, is an engineer, and her mother, Tricia Crabtree, is an office manager. She lives with her parents in Rancho Santa Fe, California, not far from San Diego. She has one older sister, Rhiannon.

An athletic girl, Crabtree was an avid gymnast when she was younger. During grade school, she also enjoyed track, tennis and swimming. Since enrolling at La Costa Canyon High School in Carlsbad, California, she has become a talented volleyball player. A straight A student, Crabtree is a member of her school's debate team and is learning American Sign Language. After graduating from high school, she hopes to attend an Ivy League college and eventually to forge a career in politics.

## MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Crabtree first became involved in charitable activities when she was just seven years old. In October 1997 she and her mother began hand-painting hairclips for her to wear to gymnastics class. "They were so pretty I thought I could sell them," she said. Just as she was reaching that conclusion, two events increased her determination to earn money. First, her grandmother was diagnosed with colon cancer. She eventually made a full recovery, but Crabtree saw how hard it was for her to fight the disease. Crabtree then saw a TV news report about city police programs that provided teddy bears to frightened children.

These two events inspired Crabtree to comfort younger cancer patients by giving them teddy bears to hug when they were frightened or in pain. She set an initial goal of earning enough money to provide teddy bears to 50 children. "I thought her too-high goal was that of a child who didn't really understand [the challenges involved]," her mother recalled. "I was the one who didn't understand."

## A Community Effort

Crabtree decided she would hand-paint and sell hairclips at local stores to buy bears for the children. She set up her little craft operation in her bedroom and the family kitchen, and within a matter of weeks local media outlets were publicizing the project. The growing publicity about her efforts to buy "TayBears" (a playful blend of "teddybear" and Crabtree's first

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*Crabtree set a goal of providing teddy bears — “pre-hugged” by her or one of her helpers — to 50 children. “I thought her too-high goal was that of a child who didn’t really understand [the challenges involved],” her mother recalled. “I was the one who didn’t understand.”*

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name) helped get the whole community involved. Local supermarkets stuffed bags with her fliers and kept donation canisters near the checkouts, and word-of-mouth about her efforts spread through local schools and churches alike.

"Pretty soon I found out that I couldn't keep up with the inventory," Crabtree recalled. "I knew that people wanted to buy my hairclips but I was selling them faster than I could make them. I needed help fast! So I

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*"When I started I didn't know anything about business," Crabtree recalled. "In school I was learning to add small numbers and stuff. That worked fine in the beginning. There were only two small numbers to add. \$2.50 per hair clip times 2 makes \$5, and I could add by 5s pretty well. Then the numbers started getting bigger and I learned to add bigger numbers. It happened just like that."*

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asked my friends to help and set up several 'painting parties' at my house." Eventually hundreds of other children, including special-needs children, became helpers. "Taylor wanted other kids to feel they too were capable of helping others in their own way," her mother said. "It has been rather like a chain letter from the heart."

The project finally became so big that it outgrew the Crabtree household. The youngster promptly moved her art sessions into schools and community centers, both to accommodate her growing army of helpers and to let her mother reclaim the family kitchen for meals.

Crabtree is very proud that so many other kids have become involved in the project. In fact, only children are permitted to prepare the bears for shipping. They give each one a name, a special tag with the TayBear logo, and a big hug. "That's so they're delivered with love," Crabtree said. "By

being part of TayBear, hundreds of kids have already proven that it is possible to make a difference—even if you are under five feet tall and haven't finished middle school yet."

Crabtree's efforts to get teddy bears to children who have cancer and chronic blood diseases have been heartily embraced by area hospitals, which provide her with estimates of how many children with cancer or blood diseases they see in a year. TayBear tries to provide that many bears. Crabtree visits hospitals to deliver bears in person whenever she can.



*Crabtree with some of the stuffed animals collected by her organization.*

Otherwise, bears are given to nurses who present the bears to young patients.

### **Learning about Business**

Crabtree freely admits that the early days of TayBear were extremely challenging. "When I started I didn't know anything about business," she said. "In school I was learning to add small numbers and stuff. That worked fine in the beginning. There were only two small numbers to add. \$2.50 per hair clip times 2 makes \$5, and I could add by 5s pretty well. Then the numbers started getting bigger and I learned to add bigger numbers. It happened just like that."

Crabtree realized that she needed to know how all her money was being spent. "So I learned some Quicken [a computer-software program for business] to keep better control of my money and went to the bank to get a business account," she said. "I learned that it is hard to start a business

with very little money. I started to look at my expenses in a way that I could understand. For every \$5 spent . . . that would be one child without a bear."

Crabtree eagerly sought out ideas and suggestions from others to help run and improve her business. "By talking to a lot of people I'm able to get more ideas than I could have on my own. I really learned a lot about running a business," she said. She keeps careful records of all her supplies, sales donations, and of her business checking account. Crabtree also solicited companies and individuals to donate money to pay for the cost of shipping TayBears across the country. These displays of business skills have been a real eye-opener for Crabtree's mother. "I've listened with amazement as she's discussed the huggability of the teddy bears with vendors and later ordered 700 teddy bears after negotiating a lower price," she said.

### **Promoting TayBear**

Once TayBear was firmly established, Crabtree began visiting elementary schools and middle schools across the United States to meet principals who could help her get students involved. At first, her mother went into the meetings with her. But soon she handled them on her own. "My parents have taught me that shyness doesn't get you anywhere," Crabtree said. "You just got to go for everything with all you got."

Crabtree also has shared her vision by making speeches to people—from small groups of kids to audiences of hundreds of adults. In 2000, for example, an international association of financial and insurance executives called the Million Dollar Round Table asked her to speak at its convention in San Francisco. She was their youngest-ever speaker. After asking the audience of nearly 7,000 to buy hairclips, they bought out her supply of 500 in just a few hours. The following year she received a \$10,000 grant from the foundation to continue her work.

Crabtree says that another one of her most memorable speeches was delivered to the Young Entrepreneurs Organization in San Diego. Afterwards, she said, "People kept coming from the back and pulling money out, the money kept piling higher and higher on the table. My mom was crying and my dad was laughing. Here I was, just giving a normal speech and all of sudden here were all these donations." TayBear received \$3,700 that day in cash gifts. Later that day, Crabtree received a promise of \$10,000 from a businessman who heard her speech. The money allowed her to list her business with the U.S. government and to set up a board of directors—with herself as chairperson, president, and founder of TayBear Co.

Crabtree has continued to work on TayBear since that time. Since starting the organization in 1997, she and her hundreds of young helpers (“and a few grownups,” she adds) have given away more than 20,000 bears to children in hospitals all over the United States and in Canada. “It’s really kind of fun and inspiring to watch her,” her father said. “She’s had to cut back on some of the sports, but TayBear is another opportunity for her to develop skills other children might not and carry them into adulthood.”

In January 2006, *People* magazine highlighted Crabtree and TayBear. The article featured one of the bear’s recipients, a four-year-old named Andrew Granger. The little boy hugged his bear through long and difficult medical treatment, including chemotherapy, radiation, and two stem-cell transplants. He’s well now, and keeps his bear in his bedroom. “It’s just unbelievable that a kid did this for another kid,” said Andrew’s mother, Margaret. A nine-year-old patient from Oklahoma also wrote to Crabtree after receiving one of her bears, which he named Little Scotty. “Any time I have a nightmare, I squeeze Little Scotty, and he gets rid of my bad dreams,” the boy wrote. Needless to say, these stories are welcome confirmation to Crabtree that her years of hard work are making a difference in the lives of young people across North America.

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## HONORS AND AWARDS

Entrepreneurial Achievement Award (Ernst & Young): 1999

George Washington Honor Medal (Freedom Foundation at Valley Forge): 1999

Honorary Membership (Young Entrepreneurs’ Organization): 1999

Born Hero (Lands’ End): 2000

Star Kid (*American Girl* magazine): 2001

Angels in Action Award (Angel Soft): 2004

## FURTHER READING

### Books

Giovagnoli, Melissa. *Angels in the Workplace*, 1999