



# Taylor Crabtree:

## A Girl Who Helps Kids

by Sarah Verney

### BEARS HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE

If you went to Taylor Crabtree's house, you might find hundreds of teddy bears hanging out in her living room. No, Taylor isn't a teddy bear

nut, though she does like the fuzzy little guys. The bears are all waiting to be sent to sick kids in hospitals all around the country.

Eleven-year-old Taylor is the president of TayBear Company, a charity that sells hand-painted hairclips and uses the profits to buy teddy bears for kids who have cancer. Taylor started TayBear three and a half years ago. She and her mother had painted some hairclips for Taylor to wear, and they were so pretty Taylor thought she could sell them. Her mother assumed that Taylor wanted a little extra spending money, but Taylor had something else in mind.

Though only seven, Taylor had already been touched by cancer. One of her grandmothers had died of the disease, and so had the vice-principal of her elementary school.

Her mother assumed that Taylor wanted a little extra spending money, but Taylor had something else in mind.

Taylor had also known people who'd had cancer and survived—her other grandmother, and her best friend from preschool. She knew that even for people who got well again, cancer could be a sad and scary experience, and she felt especially bad about kids who got cancer. She wanted to do something that would cheer them up and show them that other kids cared about them.

## BEARLY IN BUSINESS

Taylor set a goal for herself: she would sell enough hairclips to buy 50 bears for sick kids. Fifty seemed like an impossibly high number at the time, but Taylor was determined. First she sold the clips to friends and teachers at her school. Then she sold the clips at a local store. As Taylor's mom waited patiently nearby, Taylor told anyone who would listen what she was trying to do. Most people were as impressed by her sincerity as her pretty hairclips. Before long, Taylor had sold enough clips to buy her 50 bears.

The clips were selling so well, Taylor started taking orders for more. Why stop at 50? she thought. Why not 500 bears? The only trouble was, the clips were selling even faster than Taylor could paint them. She needed help.

Taylor's friends came to the rescue. They all liked the idea of kids helping kids so much that Taylor began to organize regular "painting parties" at her house. After a few months, though, Taylor's mom wanted her dining room table back, so Taylor needed to find another place to have her parties. She asked her local schools and churches if they could donate space in which to hold the painting parties. Enough people said "yes" that Taylor was eventually able to get hundreds of kids involved.

## LEARNING THE BASICS

With all those kids ready and willing to work, though, Taylor needed more and more money for supplies. She had to buy the clips and the paints, plus the cards that would be printed with a poem and attached to the bears. Taylor learned to be very careful with the money she earned. "I knew that for every five dollars I spent," Taylor says, "that would be one child without a bear."

Taylor also figured out that the more supplies she could convince people to donate, the more money she'd have for bears. She began writing to large companies to ask for help. Sometimes, she was able to get what she needed, though there were also many times when the answer was a kind but firm "no." Taylor took the rejections in stride. "I learned not to take it personally when people tell me 'no,' because it just takes one 'yes' and it feels good again," she says.

