



YOUNG
Heroes

TayBear & Company

Imagine getting an I.O.U. for \$10,000?

That's what happened recently to 9-year-old Taylor Marie Crabtree.

By Patricia Dolphin

Taylor Crabtree of San Diego Calif., loves teddy bears, helping others, gymnastics, swimming, track, tennis, learning sign language and her dog, Shadow. She is also the president and CEO of TayBear Co., a company that raises donations to buy teddy bears for kids with cancer.

Taylor started the company at the age of 7. The idea came to her after a friend in her gymnastic group had to earn money to attend gymnastic camp, and like her friend, Taylor bought hair clips with the money she had, painted them, and sold them.

"At first my mom thought I was selling them to get money for Christmas presents, but it was for something more." Taylor told her mom she wanted to do something for people in need and with the profits from the clips, so became TayBear Co.

Both Taylor's grandmothers had cancer; one died from the disease and the other is courageously surviving hers.

"I realized I knew a lot of people who had cancer and how hard it was for them, especially little kids, so I decided to raise money to get bears for kids with cancer."

The hospitals tell Taylor approximately how many kids with cancer they see every year and she provides them that number of bears. For example, this year Taylor donated 300 bears to UCSD, a research hospital in San Diego.

Taylor will deliver hundreds of bears at a time to a hospital and maybe hand out ten at that time to the kids. Nurses give out the bears the rest of the time because they really know the best time to give the bears to the children.

About 456 kids, ranging in age from 4 to 15, volunteer their time to help paint the clips to be sold and put the bears together for delivery. At her last painting party Taylor had 200 kids helping out.

Taylor just got her non-profit license.

"I'm getting a lot more donations, I just got a \$10,000 one," she said, referring to a donation given to her at a recent conference for the Young Entrepreneurs



Organization where Taylor was asked to give a speech. After my speech a guy walked up to me and pulled out a \$100 and said, "I think you're doing a good thing."

"People kept coming from the back and pulling money out, the money kept piling higher and higher on the table." Taylor remembers, "My mom was crying and my dad was laughing. Here I was, just giving a normal speech and all of a sudden there were all these donations. I was thinking, what just happened here?" That day Taylor raised \$3700 in cash donations.

Later on, Taylor was looking through the stack of business cards she acquired that day and on the back of one was written I.O.U. \$10,000. "I'm so glad I didn't lose it."

All donations are distributed, with 7% going to supplies, and 93% to the bears. Among the things she sells are painted hair clips and sunglasses. Taylor handles all aspects of the business including speaking to businesses to encourage donations of money and supplies, keeping track of her company's finances, and supervising the production of her hand-painted accessories.

Taylor also had the chance to go to Washington D.C. for the March on Cancer, where General Norman Schwarzkopf personally gave her an assignment to help decorate the wall of courage.

"I got to decorate it with hundreds of cut-out bears that classmates had helped color."

Her advice to other young entrepreneurs is "Believe in yourself, keep good records, it's o.k. to make mistakes, be very careful with your expenses, never, never give up, ask for help, don't try to do everything yourself, and enjoy the little moments."

When asked if she thought of herself as a hero, Taylor responded, "Not even."

