

THE EARLY SHOW Series

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High School Hero Comforts Kids With Cancer

Taylor Crabtree Is On A Mission To Provide Child Cancer Victims With Teddy Bears To Ease Their Pain

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VISTA, Calif., Nov. 1, 2006



Taylor Crabtree founded Tay-bear Hugs to provide child cancer victims with toy bears. (CBS/The Early Show)

(CBS) Taylor Crabtree is just 16 but has spent more than half her life providing comfort to kids with cancer. She was recently profiled in People magazine's series, "Heroes Among Us."

Taylor was 7 years old when she had a simple idea: She wanted to give a toy bear to every child with cancer. Taylor had seen the effect cancer had on her grandmother and thought about the toll it was taking on kids her age.

"She just felt she wanted to give them a bear ... to love them, to, to hug, and to just distract them," Taylor's mother, Tricia Crabtree, told The Early Show.

QUOTES

"What she gives back to her community, I think, is exceptional. I think if we could all take a piece of that, we'd live in a much better place."

Leanne Debora, Taylor Crabtree's volleyball coach.

Taylor started her own company, raising money to buy the bears and giving each one a name and a hug. The 7-year old called her project the Tay-bear and began contacting hospitals.

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"Initially, you wonder if this is the parents really trying to do this on behalf of a child. But it really came through that this was her work and

her idea and her dream," says Kathy Ruccione, a nursing administrator at Los Angeles Children's Hospital Cancer Center.

Taylor's dream is still going strong, despite a schedule that includes five honors classes and varsity volleyball.

"What she gives back to her community, I think, is exceptional," says Leanne Debora, Taylor's volleyball coach. "I think if we could all take a piece of that, we'd live in a much better place."

Joanne Pastula, president of San Diego Junior Achievement, is one of Taylor's mentors and one of her biggest fans.

"I think she's one of those kids that sees that the sky's the limit," Pastula says. "You know, she's just plain inspirational. This kid's for real. She's not doing this for reasons other than what her heart is telling her."

"She really has the human touch of making, trying to make things better for kids that are going through something really, really awful," Ruccione said.

Taylor also gets letters from the people she touched.

"Thank you doesn't seem like enough," one said. "More people need to be like you. God bless."

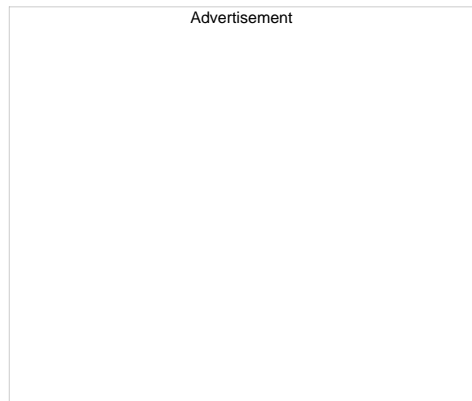
"Letters like this really keep me going," Taylor said.

One of the most touching notes came from the father of Ryan, a 13-year-old cancer patient from Chicago.

"I just want to let you know that at least one boy was made happy by the work you do," the letter said.

Taylor visited Ryan as his condition worsened. She consoled him, and gave him a bear named Duffy. Ryan died just two weeks later.

"They buried the bear with Ryan," Taylor's mother says. "You know as a parent, I put myself in the position of the father, where I can really appreciate someone



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» else caring for my child ... and wanting to give them something to comfort them."

What started as a small project has blossomed into a commercial enterprise. Taylor now has 1,600 volunteers helping her, and so far, has shipped out more than 20,000 Tay-bears. But she wants to do more.

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» "I really need shipping money, because I've got bears all over my house that I really want to get out, and I've got hospitals and children all over the country who need them, and it's frustrating sitting here and not being able to send them to them," she says.

"She's been that way ever since she was a little girl," Tricia Crabtree says. "She just doesn't give up."

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» "She can do anything and she, I think another unique thing about her is that she knows that. And she gives back so much," DeBora says.

Taylor appreciates the recognition, but says she's not comfortable with being called a hero.

» "I saw that there was a problem, and I saw that children with cancer were in hospital beds, and I couldn't imagine being like that, and I thought that they needed something to keep them occupied, to keep them happier," she says.

You can learn more about how to help Taylor Crabtree at TayBearHugs.org.

Learn more about People magazine's series at People.com.

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Taylor I'm very proud of you it takes alot of courage, time, determination and a strong young lady to do what have done for these children. I lost my Daddy to luekemia and very painful to lose a loved one. Now, I'm being tested for luekemia,lung cancer. It's been really hard for me. I'm a single mom of three beautiful ages 18,14 and 12yrs. old. They are Honor Students and my 18yr. old is attending college now. She's been my my backbone and they're all so very special too me. I'd rather it be methat suffers the pain instead of my girls. Cancer is an awful for any family to have to deal with as well as any other diease. It makes me very sad to hear how many people have to suffer or die. Your beautiful.

Posted by [rlcandelaria](#) at 05:21 PM : Nov 03, 2006

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