

8-year-old takes honor in business world

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Sun Editor

Businessmen and women from San Diego County gathered at the Torrey Pines Hilton in La Jolla last Thursday to attend the 13th annual San Diego Entrepreneur of the Year awards banquet.

With all the glitz and suspense of the Academy Awards, winners were revealed and special recognitions were distributed to a select few. Among those was an 8-year-old young lady.

Taylor Crabtree of Vista, who created *TayBear Co.*, was recognized by Ernst & Young LLP with the Junior Achievement award. She is the youngest person to receive an award in this program.

TayBear is owned and operated by Taylor, who runs the company with the assistance of other children. Her business designs and sells custom-made hair ornaments. The proceeds go to purchase *Teddy* bears that are given to young cancer patients at local hospitals.

"It was a really nice ceremony," she said. "It feels really good (to be recognized). A lot of times grown-ups sometimes don't pay attention to kids."

Recently she was at a restaurant and was ignored by the waitress in her attempt to get a spoon. As soon as her mother stepped in, service was provided.

In the business realm, she is definitely not ignored.

Tricia Crabtree said it was overwhelming to watch her daughter at the ceremony.

"I remember standing at the back of the room looking past all of these businesses, and really the movers and shakers of San Diego County, and then my little girl up on the stage," Tricia said. "It was pretty emotional. It's actually hard to express."

Tricia has no idea where her daughter will go in life, but knows she has been raised to have a good head and a good heart.

"I know she'll do well with whatever direction she ends up going," she said.

Still deciding what she wants to do when she grows up, Taylor has no plans to expand her business.

"If it gets bigger, it gets bigger," she said. "But I don't want it to get out of my

And the top entrepreneurs are ...

In addition to eight categories of entrepreneur awards, the evening recognized Joseph C. Larsen of Cardiff Software Inc. with an Entrepreneurial Achievement Award. Much like a lifetime achievement, this award was given to Larsen, who started Cardiff Software in San Marcos.

He developed the company's main product, *TELEform*, which automated the process of collecting data from forms and entering it into a database. At age 41, Larsen was killed, along with his wife and two children, in a plane crash on April 3.

Life Sciences: Dr. Peter Johnson of Agouron Pharmaceuticals.



John Sarkisian
Oscar's restaurant

Consumer Products/Retail: John Sarkisian of Oscar's family restaurant.

General Category: George Haligowski of IFLA Capital Corp.

Real Estate/Construction Category: Daniel Epstein of ConAm Management.

Software/Internet Category: Christopher Crane of COMPS.COM

Telecommunications Category: David Rickey of AMCC.

Young Entrepreneur Category: Richard LaChina of AXXIS Computer Technologies.

Master Entrepreneur Category: William Stensrud of Enterprise Partners.

hands."

Although Taylor looks to adults for guidance and explanations of business guidelines and finances, she takes her advice from other children.

Now among the ranks of award-winning entrepreneurs, Taylor said she has a large pool of people from which to draw assistance.

This may be a big help to the young businesswoman, who has faced adversity because of her age. When she called one company to inquire about *Teddy* bears, she was hung up on twice.

"My mom finally called them and said, 'Why did you hang up on my daughter?' and she's like, 'We don't take any calls from children,'" Taylor said.

For the most part, though, Taylor said her age has worked to her advantage.

"Sometimes little kids are able to sell really easily, like Girl Scouts," she said. "But as you get older, it gets harder."

With the exception of keeping her room clean, Taylor said she follows through with everything she chooses to pursue. She has a well-rounded life, filled with school, homework and gymnastics.

When asked to describe herself, Taylor

has to sit back and laugh.

"That's a hard one," she said. "Everybody in my class would say I'm the perfect little kid. But I'm probably not perfect, because no one's perfect."

She eventually described herself as nice and willing to do things.

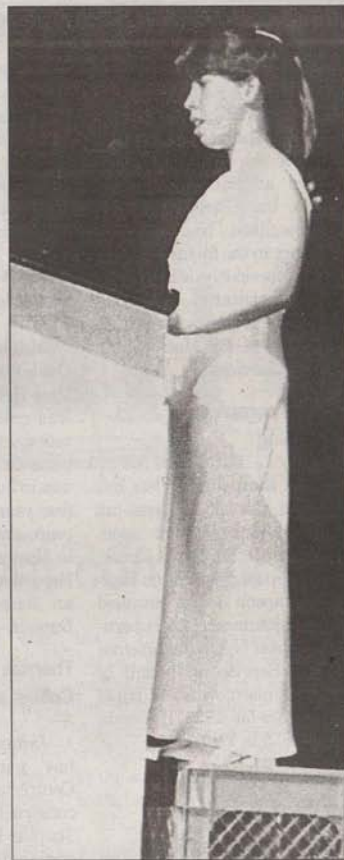
"And, as my mom and dad would say, very freaky. I act weird at home sometimes," she explained.

Meeting with the children who receive her bears is what drives Taylor. She said when things get difficult and she considers pulling back from her program, all she has to do is look at the pictures her mother takes of her handing out the bears, and her dedication returns 100 percent.

"There's a lot of pretty children, but you can't see it, because they've lost their hair because of the medicine," she said.

Taylor's efforts to help children with cancer doesn't stop at *Teddy* bears. She and her sister each cut off at least 10 inches of their hair last weekend and are giving it to the foundation that makes people's hair into wigs.

Taylor's whole family has been supportive of her *Teddy* bear project.



Photos by STEVE MARCOTTE / Sun Newspapers

Taylor Crabtree of Vista had to stand on a milk crate to give her acceptance speech.

Her mother said nothing Taylor has done has been out of character. About five years ago, Taylor fell ill with a blood disease and was frequently in the hospital. After her weekly visits with technicians, she would receive stickers for her good behavior. Instead of peeling the stickers for her own use, Taylor would have her mother take her to visit the children in the emergency room, where she handed out her stickers.

"As parents, we have to just not get in her way," Tricia said.

Taylor is now planning to go after big businesses for donations to further cancer research. She intends to approach many of the companies she encountered at the entrepreneur awards.