



"I'd rather skip the beach and deliver bears," says Crabtree (at L.A.'s Children's Hospital). "You get much more from it."

TAYLOR CRABTREE

MOVED BY HER OWN HEARTBREAK, THIS 15-YEAR-OLD GIVES 'PREHUGGED' TEDDY BEARS TO THOUSANDS OF KIDS WITH CANCER

INSPIRATION Taylor Crabtree was just 7 when her grandmother Louise Tharp was diagnosed with colon cancer, but it made a lasting impression. "I remember how hard it was on her physically," recalls Taylor, now 15. After watching a television news report on police officers who carry teddy bears to comfort traumatized children, Taylor came up with a variation on the theme: She would buy teddy bears for cancer-stricken kids. To raise money, she began to sell decorated hair clips, even taking to the loudspeaker of the local Albertson's supermarket to hawk her wares. Operating out of the bedroom of her Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., home, Taylor expanded her efforts, reaching out to local Girl Scouts and church members. Today she has a network of around 1,200 volunteers and a Web site, www.taybearhugs.org. With mostly donated funds, she buys bears for \$5 each by arrangement with Build-A-Bear Workshop founder Maxine Clark, send-

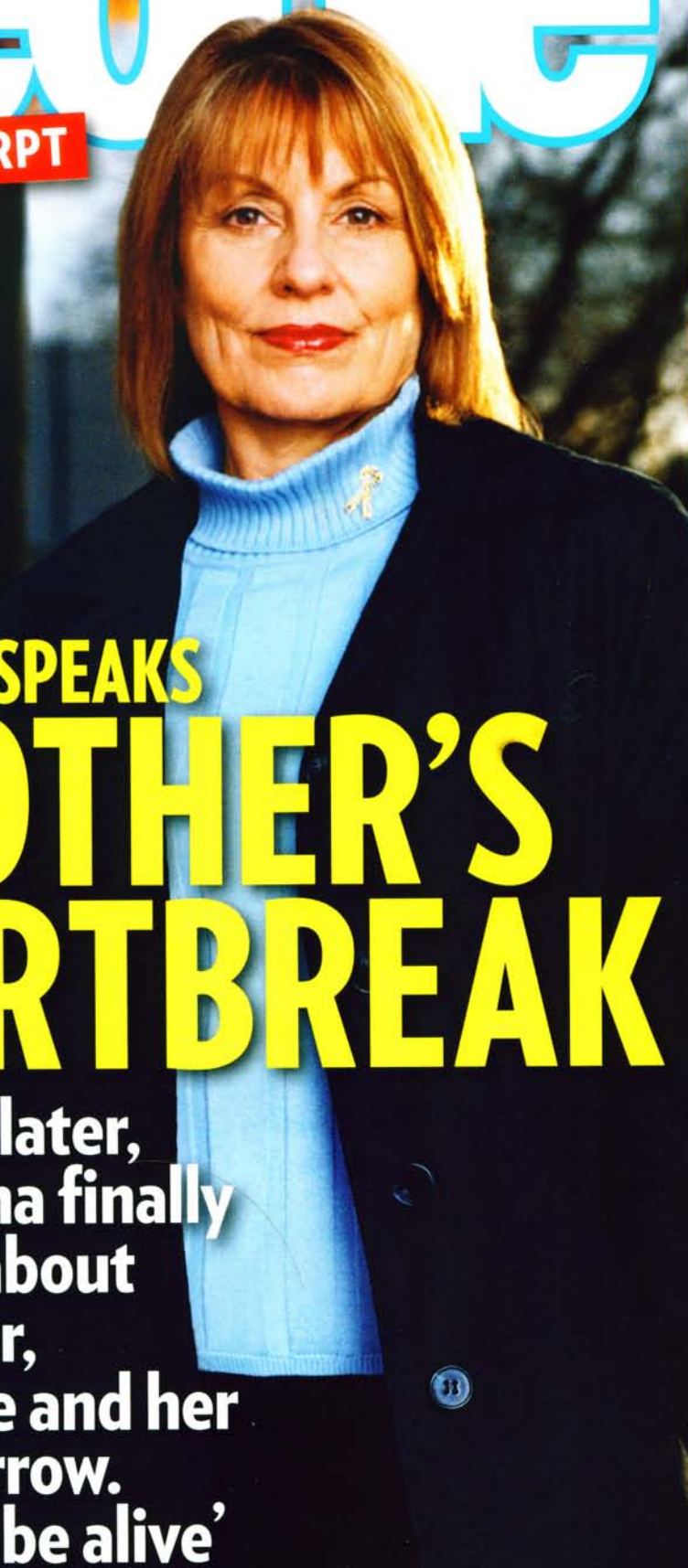
ing them out only after they have been "prehugged" by Taylor or a volunteer. "I'm just trying to ease their pain," she says. "When you have something to hold, it helps."

IMPACT Taylor has given roughly 20,000 "Taybears" to kids at 120 pediatric cancer and blood-disorder units in hospitals spread across 37 states. One recipient is 4-year-old Andrew Granger of Northport, N.Y. During treatment for neuroblastoma—a rare cancer of the nervous system—in 2002, Andrew clutched his Taybear through multiple chemotherapy sessions, two stem-cell transplants and radiation. Now cancer-free, the boy keeps the bear on a shelf in his bedroom. Andrew's mother, Margaret, says the bear—and the thought of the young girl who sent it—helped lift her own spirits during dark times. "It is just unbelievable that a kid did this for another kid," she says. ●

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