

## GIFT OF GIVING

# Katie loves her Kidz, and it shows

One thing's certain this Christmas: Katie Greene will leave smiles on the faces of several hundred kids who don't feel well.

She's the 8-year-old Wed-dington girl who stood in front of church congregations, school classrooms and civic groups with Power-Point presentations and told them about Katies Kidz, her project to give presents



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to sick children in hospitals at Christmas.

In a penciled second-grader's handwriting, she also wrote hundreds of letters asking for donations.

The money came in: More than \$9,000 this year.

Tuesday, she and her parents, Liz and Dean Greene, delivered 500 gifts to Presbyterian Hemby Children's Hospital in

the morning and an additional 800 to Levine Children's Hospital at Carolinas Medical Center in the afternoon.

That was after leaving 500 gifts at Mission Hospital in Asheville on Monday, and before she takes 100 to CMC North-east in Concord and another hundred to CMC Union in Monroe today.

She'll not be permitted to soak in one smile. Hospital flu rules prevent her from

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## GIFT

■ from 1A

visiting the children.

Doesn't matter: "I just want to make a difference," she said Tuesday at Levine, standing among boxes of wooden train sets, iPods, Hot Wheels, bubbles, puzzles and footballs.

"It hurts that I can't see them," she said. "I would tell them, 'I'm sorry you're in the hospital on Christmas. But here's a gift that I hope will make you feel better.'"

This is the third Christmas Katie has taken gifts to her Kidz. Her mother insists the effort is all Katie's.

Two years ago, she and her father were walking the aisles of a Wal-Mart when she spotted a Care Bear, and hatched the idea.

Her parents told her she'd have to raise the money.

The first year, Christmas 2007, she carried \$160 worth of gifts into Levine's lobby.

Last year, she raised \$2,600 from relatives, friends and strangers who'd heard about her story or



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**Katie Greene helps deliver hundreds of gifts to Levine Children's Hospital on Tuesday. She raised more than \$9,000 this year to buy gifts, and dropped off gifts for children at five hospitals in the region.**

read it on her Web site.

Tuesday, under the glare of TV cameras, Katie, her parents and two friends unloaded a van and pickup truck outside Levine Children's Hospital. They stacked them on eight tables. Three or four gifts will be delivered unwrapped to each child in the hospital on Thursday, Christmas Eve.

"We don't wrap the gifts be-

cause we want each parent to know what their child is getting," said Carrie Keuten, group and donation coordinator at the hospital. "What Katie has done is remarkable."

Katie spoke to many groups to get donations, including two church groups of teens. After one 40-minute talk, one group took up a collection and gave her \$500.

She also was invited to speak to Carolyn Wideman's third-grade class at Long Creek Elementary in Huntersville.

"They treated her like a rock star," Wideman said. Then the class went out and raised \$258 for Katies Kidz.

Katie asks for nothing in return.

"Believe it or not, you wouldn't see a whole bunch of toys in Katie's room," her mother said. "She's not a want-want, gimme-gimme kid. I cannot explain it."

Her father says his daughter's feelings for other children could stem from her being an only child.

"She loves kids and loves being around them," Dean said. "She can't wait to get back to school to be with her friends, but she really feels bad there are kids in the hospital, especially at Christmas."

For her Christmas, Katie wants a dog - "a real live dog." Her parents say they're getting her one in the spring.

Yet there's one thing, really two, that she needs more: Her two front teeth.

She lost one a month ago. The other came out Monday.