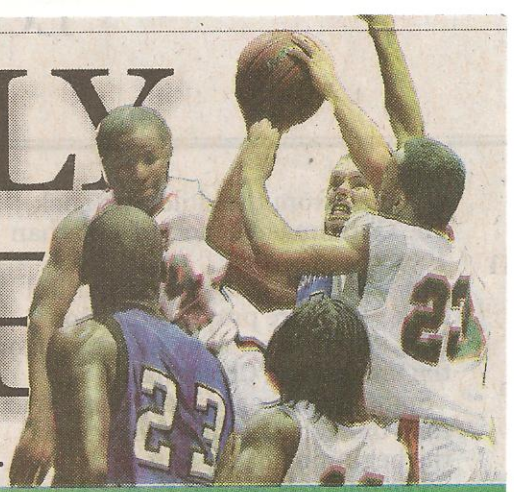


# The DAILY COURIER

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## Girl has big dreams for others

By **LARRY DALE**

Daily Courier Staff Writer

FOREST CITY — A Charlotte girl with Rutherford County connections dreams big, but unlike most 8-year-olds, she is making her dreams come true on behalf of sick children.

Katie Greene is trying to raise \$8,000 to buy Christmas presents for the children who will have to spend this holiday in four hospitals in the region.

The hospitals are Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte, Mission Hospital in Asheville, Monroe Hospital and Jeff Gordon Hospital in

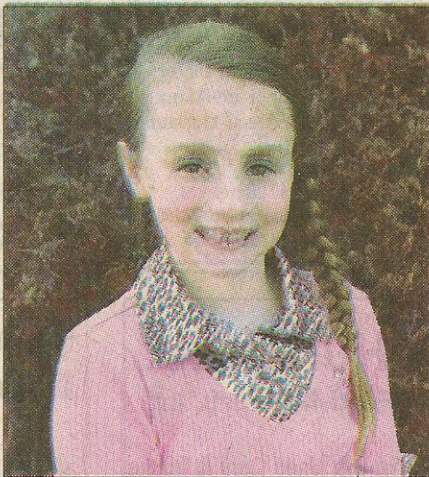
Concord.

This is the third year Katie has raised funds to help hospitalized children, and each year she has raised more money.

Katie and her parents, Dean and Elizabeth "Liz" Greene, visited *The Daily Courier* office this week to talk about her mission of helping others. Dean is a graduate of East Rutherford High School and still has family in the county.

"I was walking through Wal-Mart (in 2007), and I found a Care Bears toy and I picked it

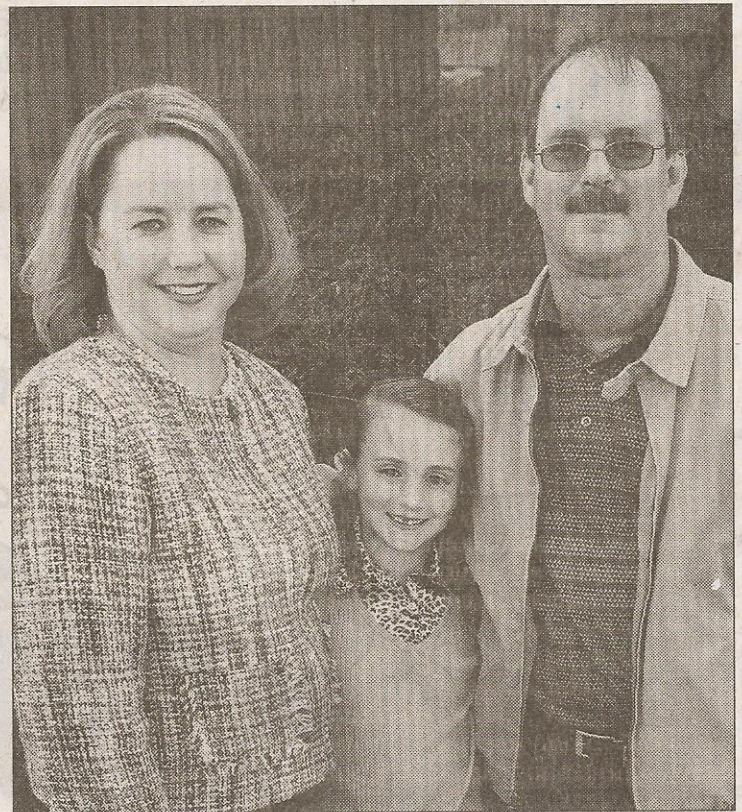
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Katie Greene

Katie Greene has the support of her parents, Dean and Elizabeth, and other family and friends in her effort to raise money for Christmas presents for sick children.

Garrett Byers/  
Daily Courier



# Dreams

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up, and all of a sudden I had this idea inside of my head, and I wanted to give presents all over the world," Katie said Wednesday.

Her grandmother, Nellie Smith of Ellenboro, recently explained, "She said that she didn't see why she couldn't get some toys for all the sick children in Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte. And she said, 'Daddy, did you know that some of the parents wouldn't get to come because they live way off. They don't have the money to come, and they might not get to see them at Christmas. And they can't go home. Why can't we do this?' He didn't think they could. He's not a rich man. He said, 'Katie, where did you get that idea?' And she said, 'I got it out of my head.' So they went to helping her."

The first year, in 2007, she raised a little less than \$200. Last year the more-organized fund-raising effort surpassed \$2,600.

Her parents knew all along that Katie's vision of helping others was a noble, but daunting task.

"I don't think she thought too much about whether she could do it or not," her father said Wednesday. "It was just, 'Let's get started on it.' Each of these years when she set her goal, I thought, goodness gracious, that's too much."

"And last year she passed her goal with a wide margin. And I never thought she would raise \$8,000 this year, but she has already passed \$5,000. She's just got this faith that it will happen. And

so we just try to work with her and kind of help her."

Katie's mother said she, too, got a lesson in the faith of a child earlier this year.

In about January or February, she said, she asked Katie if she wanted to raise money again. Katie responded with an enthusiastic yes, and her mother reminded her that she needed to set a goal for the effort. Katie said she wanted to raise \$7,000.

While mom and dad were trying to digest the thought of that large goal, Katie came back with a revision.

"About three weeks later she came to me and said, 'Mommie, I need to talk to you about something. I need to change my goal.'"

And Katie's mother probably was silently grateful that her daughter was going to set a more realistic goal. Katie said, "You know, I'm going to be eight, so I'd like to make it \$8,000."

"I said, 'You understand that is a lot of hard work,'" Liz noted. "I said, 'You've got to start working on it,' and she did. Katie does everything an 8-year-old can do, and we do the rest."

Katie has worked diligently. She has done craft shows and has raised money by having raffles. She pet sits and speaks at churches with a PowerPoint presentation, and she sends mailers that she writes herself. So, undertaking the large project is a good learning experience for Katie, her parents noted.

Her Rutherford County relatives have kicked in their time and talents, too. Dean's nephew, Todd Lavender of Sunshine, designed Katie's logo. Dean's cousin, Chad Medford, from the Ellenboro

area, shot the video that is on Katie's Web site, and the Web site itself was put together by another of Dean's cousins, Jason Pittman, who lives in Birmingham, Ala., but who was born and raised near Ellenboro.

The Christmas mission has made Katie a savvy shopper, too.

"At Christmastime, I go around and ask the managers for discounts," Katie said. "We get crafts at Michael's at a 30 percent discount. And that was very nice. And we went to buy iPods at the iPod store and they gave me a 10 percent discount and two free iPods."

She started buying presents at the start of the new school year, "because that's where some of the good prices are," she said.

But the really serious shopping has to wait until closer to the big day.

"The week before Christmas is when most of it will be done," Liz said, "because it is then before she knows how much money she has to work with."

She noted, for example, "We were going to buy three iPods, and the bank called and said you've just gotten in more money. So that increased our budget. So we could use that money to buy eight additional iPods. You kind of have to wait until the end to know exactly."

Katie is mindful that the young patients may have limited mobility, so she selects presents that don't require a lot of movement.

The 8-year-old knows, too, that there are two age groups of patients that might need extra attention.

"The people who need the most presents are the toddlers and the teenagers," she said. "They get overlooked a lot."

Katie's gift-buying work is truly altruistic, because she doesn't even get to see the kids that will receive the presents.

"I have germs, and they have germs, and I don't want to get them more sick," she said. "And I wouldn't want to get me sick."

The project has reminded the Greenses that this is what Christmas was meant to be.

"It is a huge undertaking, but it is a blessing," Liz said. "When you talk to people who have had children in the hospital, or you personally know people whose children are in the hospital, and the stress that the family is under and the pressure, then you think, 'OK, if this makes a child feel better, so that as a parent I can think about how my child is smiling today, wow, what an impact.'"

Katie added, "These parents are trying to get their children better. They don't have any extra spending money to go and get toys for their children. And toys are what make kids smile."

Dean noted, "Well, it's been wonderful for me because Christmas has always been a very special time for me. But it seemed like Christmas had gotten to the point that it was just a time to do a bunch of visiting and eat too much. And of course I still plan to do all that, but it is so good because these last three years our Christmas has been on other people besides ourselves. And in a way it's been the best Christmases I've ever had."

Liz agreed. "It has become what our Christmas is about."