

Tega Cay COMPASS

Community Magazine

Little Girl with a Huge Heart

Katies Kidz

FEATURED STORY

A Little Girl with a Huge Heart

By Kirsten Gordon

In 2007, when Katie Greene was six years old, she came up with the idea to give toys to sick children, hoping that they would feel better and have a happy Christmas. With her parents' support, she began to focus her efforts on local children starting with the Levine Children's Hospital patients unable to go home for the holidays. These children are precluded from leaving the hospital for reasons including severe illness and lack of economic resources.

In three days, Katie raised \$162 (including money she'd been saving for almost a year to buy a puppy) and presented the hospital with

two huge Santa bags filled with presents – an event Katie described later as “the best time of my life.”

Her father authored a story titled, “Led by a Child” which resulted in a flurry of phone calls and e-mails from people congratulating Katie for her accomplishments. On Valentine's Day 2008, Katie received several cards containing money – all of which she stuffed in a jar for “her kids”. On her birthday in July, she likewise saved her money. Her parents saved their pocket change.

The family decided that, in order to repeat the gift giving in 2008, they needed PR and an easy donation process. They opened a savings account for Katie, created an email account, and launched KatiesKidz.org. Katie wrote letters introducing herself, telling her story, and asking for contributions to some 130 contacts. As hits began to register on her website, the money came, and Katie thanked each donor with a personal note. Katie set the project goal at \$2,008 and she hoped to buy an iPod or two for the older children.

Katie then called New Life 91.9 FM and told Gary Morland about her kids. The two-minute interview aired several times during the next couple of days. Hits on the website spiked and contributions flowed in from new donors. Her story went viral and touched peoples' hearts.

After some newspaper coverage, contributions topped \$1,000. A spot on WIXE 1190 AM brought in over \$700! She sailed past her goal with a full week left to go before

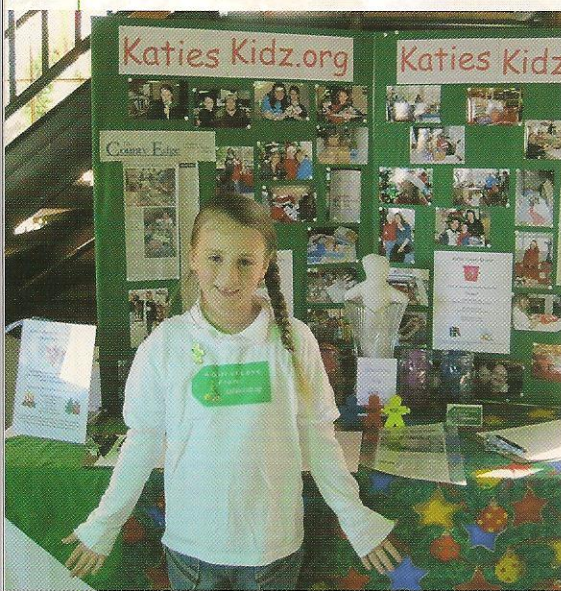


Christmas.

Katie then went shopping! Armed with store flyers, she met store managers and asked for discounts on behalf of her kids. The response was excellent. Having raised over \$2,600, it was her dream to buy eight iPods. The store manager, touched by Katie's story, gave her two additional iPods for free. The shopping resulted in eight buggies-full of art and craft supplies, books, toys, an armload of personal CD players, several dozen card and board games, and gift cards. Katie then began sorting, labeling, and repacking over six hundred gifts, fifty Chick-Fil-A gift cards, and many calendars.

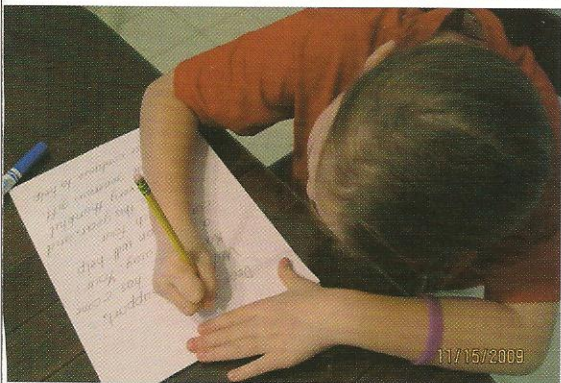
Katie, in her red sweater and Santa cap, reveled in her moment delivering the awe-inspiring loot to the hospital. Dubbed “Katie Claus” in The Charlotte Observer, several hundred more dollars arrived. Katie vowed, “Next year we're going to do two hospitals.”

A surge of website activity followed with late donations that continued well into the New





Year. Her fundraising goal for 2009 was \$8,000—three times the amount that she raised in 2008. She began socking away money. Katie's efforts received more press via the "Gallant Kids" section of Highlights for Children. Her father entered Katie's story into the Kohl's Kids Who



Care Scholarship Program, which provides scholarship money to youngsters who take part in activities that help people and/or improve a community.

Katie's lofty goals required more resources like purchasing assistance, storage space, labor for sorting, labeling and packing gifts, additional transportation capacity, a Pay-Pal account. As the list of needs continued to grow, the family started tackling them straight-away.

Katie received a letter from Kohl's Department Stores informing her that her story had won at the store level and was a contender at the regional level. The potential publicity from these two events is a boost of which Katie could only have dreamed! However; Katie has not been sitting around waiting. Through the summer, she did pet sitting and other jobs. She has been taking an information booth to craft shows around the area, where she chats up her cause and sells raffle tickets and wristbands to raise money. She presented at three churches that responded with love offerings and individual contributions - one even had a hotdog supper and donated all the proceeds to Katie's Kidz!

In her spare time, Katie writes thank-you notes to donors, does homework, works on her parts in school and church Christmas programs, and practices karate - as she will be going for her Jr. Black Belt next month. At press time, Katie had raised almost \$6400 of her \$8000 goal and

she is confident of reaching the full amount. If that is indeed the case, her generosity and hard work will touch at least four hospitals; and possibly five or six, this Christmas. Any donations that she receives from Compass readers will go into her account for next Christmas. As always, 100% of the money she receives goes toward the purchase of presents. Well done, Katie!



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