

KeizerCommunity

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Girl Scout gives stuffed animals to local hospitals

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Born premature, Ashlee Ellis was comforted by stuffed animals, particularly a pink and white dog and a small giraffe, as she lived in hospital emergency rooms fighting asthma and other health issues.

Now a healthy eighth grader at Whiteaker Middle School, Ellis wants to make sure all kids get that same comfort.

Working towards her Girl Scouts silver award, Ellis collected over 500 items including stuffed animals, blankets, coloring books and fuzzy socks to be donated to hospital pediatric and emergency rooms in Salem, Silverton, Stayton and Dallas.

"I decided to do this because I know how kids and teens feel because I was always in hospitals and they always gave me a stuffed animal or blanket and it provides comfort for them," Ellis said. "Some hospitals don't have that for kids so I just wanted to give back."

Ellis, who had an asthma attack at Yellowstone National Park four years ago and had to spend two days at Madison Valley Medical Center in Ennis, Mont., also knows what it's like to be on that side of things as the emergency room didn't have any stuffed animals for kids.

Realizing a need was there,



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Ellis began sending a box of stuffed animals to the hospital each year.

Ellis is in Girl Scouts troop 11863, led by Mary Couser.

"Ashlee has an amazing heart," Couser said.

To spread the word of her project, Ellis created business cards to hand out while she sold cookies.

It wasn't uncommon for someone to buy cookies on their way into a store and then come out later with a stuffed animal.

Ellis sold a 1,000 boxes of Girl Scout cookies this year.

Ashlee also got help from her older brother, Brady, a junior at McNary High School, who created a website (<http://creatingcomfort-oregonhospitals.blogspot.com/>) and Facebook page.

Two of her teachers at Whiteaker, Meredith Sheridan



Whiteaker Middle School student Ashlee Ellis, left, center, donated stuffed animals and coloring books to Santiam Hospital in Stayton. She is pictured with her friend Michael Austin, mother Mindy and chief nursing officer Sherri Steele.

Submitted

and Lauren Stephenson, put donation boxes in their rooms.

Ellis also heard from old elementary school friends and

received packages in the mail from as far as New York and Washington, D.C.

When Ellis received a check,

she made sure to spend the money wisely, often purchasing items on clearance. The manager at Rite Aid would

even let her know when stuffed animals were on sale.

Her best friend, Michael Austin, provided muscle, helping deliver the items along with Brady and her mother Mindy.

Ellis wants to continue the work into high school and even create a new club at McNary.

Dress blue



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VVP Keizer Medical Group recently participated in National Dress in Blue Day for colon cancer awareness and prevention.

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