

NEWS

Huntertown Elementary School donates close to 600 books to Kate's Kart

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HUNTERTOWN - The gesture is simple and the meaning behind it is truly inspiring.

A book, maybe 20 pages, maybe 40, maybe even triple digits worth, was enough to put a smile on their daughter's face and now, Andrew and Krista Layman want to continue providing smiles, through books, for hospitalized children.

The Laymans have created a program called Kate's Kart, founded in memory of their daughter Katherine Anne Layman, which provides free books to hospitalized children for their enjoyment.

"Baby Kate" was diagnosed with a broken heart shortly after her birth on June 26, 2006. More specifically, Tetralogy of Fallot with Pulmonary Arteria associated with the 22q chromosomal deletion. She endured four open heart surgeries, five heart catheterizations, and over 150 days in the hospital.

On January 15, 2008, her heart gave out and she passed away in her mother's arms.

"One of Kate's favorite things to do was look at books and have people read to her," Krista said during a presentation at Huntertown Elementary School on Friday afternoon.

It was at Friday's assembly where the students of Huntertown Elementary donated close to 600 books to help children in area hospitals smile.

"For some reason, kids just cling to this. They see the pictures of Kate and they just want to help," Layman stated. "To me, it is just extra special when the donations come from the kids."

In honor of Kate, and her love of books, the Layman family has started a rolling book kart at various local hospitals. The kart is randomly filled with new books, and each child is able to select a book off the kart to keep.

The first Kate's Kart rolled through the halls of Lutheran Hospital on Wednesday, June 4, 2008. In the first seven months, 3,000 books were passed out.

Now, with a team of over 50 volunteers, Karts have also been added to Parkview (Main) Hospital, Parkview North Hospital, Jay County Hospital, and Parkview Noble Hospital.

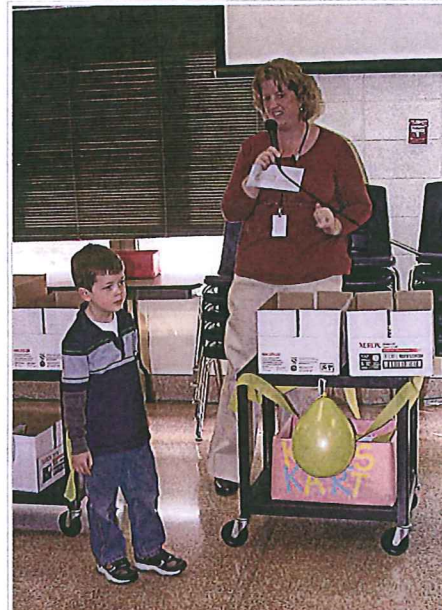
Three other hospitals, Dupont Hospital, St. Joseph Hospital, and another in Muncie are inquiring about having a kart roam through their hallways.

"They took a struggling, heart-felt situation within their family, and turned it into something good for sick children in the hospital, and they need to be blessed for that," said Huntertown Elementary School Counselor Cheryl Wagoner while presenting Layman with a check which students raised money for through a buy one get one free book fair the school held last fall.

According to Huntertown Elementary School Principal John MacLeod, most of the students bought a book for themselves, and donated the free book to Kate's Kart.

In October, Hickory Center Elementary School donated 155 books and \$150 in conjunction with their annual book fair.

Kate's Kart has even received a monetary donation from NBA star, and East Noble High School graduate, Brad Miller of the Sacramento Kings.



Krista Layman, with her son Seth, address the students of Huntertown Elementary School after receiving a donation of nearly 600 books for their Kate's Kart program that hands out free books to hospitalized children. (NWN photo by Ryan Schwab)