

Young diabetes patient donates toys for other children

Katie Rhoten was only 9 years old when she became critically ill and was rushed to the hospital during her family's dream vacation to Disney World in January 2008. Diagnosed with type I diabetes, the Eau Claire girl often was given a toy by hospital staff to ease some of her anxiety before receiving an injection of insulin.

Katie never forgot the kindness of the medical staff or the impact of the gifts during her hospital stay, so on the first anniversary of her Jan. 23 diagnosis, Katie donated six boxes of toys, games and other fun items to Luther Midelfort to be distributed to children and their siblings who found themselves at the hospital.

Two years later, Katie and her family continue to accumulate items to donate, but now they've enlisted a little more help. Katie, brother Spencer and neighborhood children staffed lemonade stands during the summer to raise money to buy toys. This fall, Katie's classmates at Robbins Elementary also collected 80 stuffed animals for the cause.

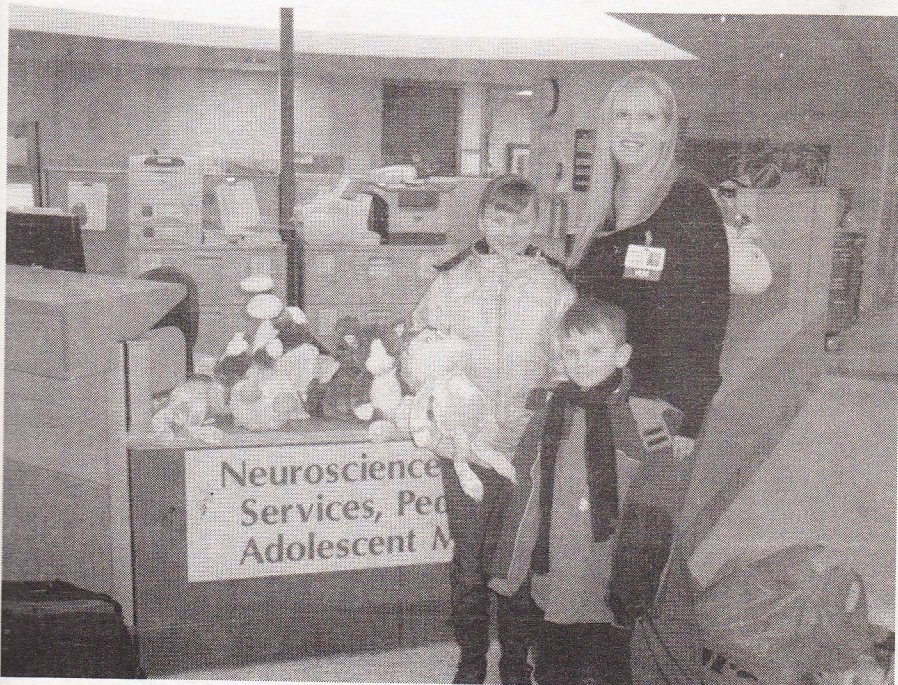
On Wednesday, Jan. 27, Katie and

her family presented the items to Luther Midelfort. Nursing staff give blankets, stuffed animals or toys to children (and their siblings) if they are hospitalized or come in for some sort of treatment or outpatient procedure, said registered nurse Lisa Moelter, who has been Luther Midelfort's pediatric nurse coordinator for the last 11 years. Children also might find themselves in the Emergency Department unexpectedly as they accompany a severely injured adult.

"A lot of time, these kids are scared and don't know what's going to happen, so these care items really provide a comfort," Moelter said.

Katie also has become an advocate for diabetes research. In June, she was one of three Wisconsin delegates to visit Washington, D.C., as part of the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation's "2009 Kids Congress."

People with diabetes and their family members and friends can attend free monthly support group meetings at Luther Midelfort. For dates and times, contact Luther Midelfort's Diabetes Education Department at 715-838-6594.



Katie, along with her brother Spencer, delivered five bags of toys to Shannara Faupl, supervisor of Luther Midelfort's Neurosciences/Pediatrics/Trauma Department, on Jan. 27, 2010.