

Good deeds recognized

Eau Claire girl among national finalists for \$10,000 college scholarship

By Chris Vetter

Chippewa Falls News Bureau

An Eau Claire girl who started a fund five years ago to donate thousands of toys, stuffed animals and books to area hospitals is now among 10 finalists nationwide for a \$10,000 college scholarship.

Katharine Rhoten, 14, is an eighth-grader at South Middle School.

On Jan. 23, 2008, when Katie was 9, she



Rhoten

became ill on a family vacation to Disney World in Orlando, Fla. Physicians there diagnosed her with Type 1 diabetes.

Gifts of stuffed animals greatly helped Katie during her hospital stay. She realized such loving gifts would help other children

who wind up in a hospital.

In the years since her diagnosis, she has made it a goal to provide similar gifts to children at hospitals, starting Katharine's Wish with the Eau Claire Community Foundation.

"She started it immediately, when she was diagnosed," said her mother, Kristin Rhoten. "She has donated 5,000 toys over five years. This year we donated to seven hospitals in Wisconsin and Minnesota

How to Help

Contributions to the Katharine's Wish fund can be made by mail or online:

Via mail: Eau Claire Community Foundation, 306 S. Barstow St., Suite 104, Eau Claire, WI 54701. Designate Katharine's Wish on checks as the recipient.

Online: Access the Foundation's website — eccommunityfoundation.org — or the Katharine's Wish website — katharineswish.org.

and numerous clinics."

In all, more than \$14,000 has been donated or pledged to the Foundation for Katharine's Wish, Kristin said.

Earlier this year Kristin came across a scholarship established by Montage Hotels & Resorts, which sought applications from young people who volunteer in their community.

"The finalists, young humanitarians between the ages of 13-17, were selected by leaders in philanthropy, based on their merits of community service, impact of achievement on the community and beyond, creativity of achievement, and inspirational value to others," the California-based hotel chain said in a press release announcing the 10 finalists last week.

Katie is the only finalist from the

Midwest.

The top five vote-getters of the 10 finalists each will earn a \$10,000 scholarship to an accredited college, along with a trip for two to the Montage Hotel in Laguna Beach, Calif.

"I was very excited," Katie said about learning of her top 10 placement. "These kids are amazing — what they are doing is wonderful. It's an honor just to be running against them."

In the weeklong voting period — which now has ended — Katie encouraged people to vote for her on her Facebook page.

"Her school has tried to spread the word and get people to vote," Kristin said. "We're just proud she's in the top 10. We're thankful of the support we have."

They hope to hear good news soon of being one of the top finalists.

"It would be held strictly for her college education," Kristin said. "It's a tremendous amount of money, as you can imagine, with her medical bills."

Kristin said Katie's diabetes, as well as an arthritis condition, are under control.

Katie gets good grades at school and is an accomplished dancer. She will be joining 20 teens nationwide who get to perform on a Broadway stage this summer.

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