

ThedaCare: 9-Year-Old continues generous birthday donation to emergency department

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NEENAH, Wis. – A thoughtful nine-year-old girl from Combined Locks is once again helping others in need. Since her fifth birthday, Ella Bast has decided to use her special day to collect gifts for children who might need a comfort item if they ever find themselves in the Emergency Department (ED) at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah.

Many may be familiar with Ella's story. When Ella's sister, Avery, was in the emergency department a few years ago, donated gifts were given to her. The family said Avery only remembered the items she received at the ED, and not the visit itself. Avery showed Ella the sippy cup and stickers when she returned home. Something resonated with Ella, and she came up with an idea to help others. Ella wanted children to feel happy when they went home, just like Avery. Now, every year for her birthday, instead of bringing a gift for her, Ella asks friends to bring a gift for the emergency department.

"I hope that kids will not feel scared or nervous when they have to visit the emergency department," said Ella. "If I can give them a little something to help calm them down, I will always do it."

The emergency department, through the ThedaCare Family of Foundations, hands

out new gifts such as stuffed animals, sippy cups, puzzles, games, stickers, coloring books and pajamas to young children or their siblings when they visit the department to help keep them occupied and calm. These gifts are sent home with the child.

“I’m so proud of Ella and her dedication to continue doing something that is special to her,” said Tracey Bast, Ella’s mother. “We know what it feels like to have children in the emergency department, and as a parent, we want to do anything we can to help those families at that time.”

Ella has donated nearly \$8,000 in gifts over the last four years. This year alone, she raised \$1,400 to spend on the children that will visit the emergency department, along with 200 items that were donated by friends and family.

Recently, Ella and her family dropped off more than 500 items to ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah’s Emergency Department. Team members thanked Ella and her family for the continued support.

“Ella’s generosity is incredible, and we are grateful to be the recipients of her caring heart,” said Audrey Rosin, Emergency Department Manager at ThedaCare Regional Medical Center-Neenah. “It’s special to see a young person who understands she can make a difference in the world, and gives her time and energy to spread joy to others, especially in a time of need.”

“Bringing all of my friends and family together every year to gather gifts for kids who visit the emergency department makes me feel so happy,” said Ella. “I plan to continue this tradition for as long as they will accept our donations. Right now, I am trying to encourage my little sisters, Avery, who is 6, and Kate, who is 4, and maybe even my little brother, Robert, who is 2, to also donate their presents someday.”

Ella is also thankful for the support she receives.

“This would not be possible without the help of all of my friends and family,” said Ella. “They are such huge supporters and I owe them a big Thank You!”

Community donations help the Foundation support ThedaCare’s mission to improve the health and well-being of communities and make experiences like the one that inspired Ella’s generosity possible.

To learn more about the ThedaCare Family of Foundations and the impact of donor support, or to make a donation, please visit www.thedacare.org/Foundations or email Foundations@thedacare.org.