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## Build-A-Bear embraces charity's founder

BY BARBARA S. ROTHSCHILD • COURIER-POST STAFF • JULY 5, 2009

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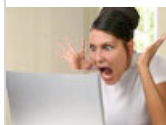
**CHERRY HILL** — Since the age of 9, Jenny Silver has been bringing holiday joy to sick and underprivileged children in the form of huggable, lovable teddy bears.

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Now, it's Jenny's turn to get a great big bear hug. The 13-year-old founder of Bowling for Bears was chosen from 900 nationwide nominees to become one of 12 Huggable Heroes for 2009.

The program, sponsored by Build-A-Bear Workshop, recognizes youth for their outstanding acts of generosity, volunteerism and leadership. Each Huggable Hero gets \$10,000 in cash and an all-expense paid trip this summer to the Build-A-Bear Workshop World Bearquarters in St. Louis.

Jenny's annual bowling fundraiser, which allows her to purchase, put together and deliver Build-A-Bear teddies, was the only winner in the bunch to have a connection with the award sponsor. But Build-A-Bear Workshop spokeswoman Molly Salky said that was sheer coincidence, with judging done by an independent organization.

"Jenny is a very special girl. It's really exciting to see kids at this age being so involved," Salky said.

Jenny will receive \$7,500 in the form of an educational scholarship and \$2,500 to be donated to the charity of her choice. For that, she didn't have to look any further than her own living room, where she hatched the idea for incorporating Bowling for Bears last year in order to grow the franchise.

As the executive vice president of a nonprofit corporation, Jenny has a long-term goal of expanding Bowling for Bears across the country. For now, she'll add the \$2,500 to what she takes



Photo provided

Jenny Silver's Bowling for Bears event in December raised money for 1,635 teddies for local hospitals and shelters.



After Jenny Silver and her family decorated last year's crop of bears, she helped delivered many of them to hospitals, shelters and a foster home.

(Photo provided)

### IF YOU GO

Jenny Silver's fifth annual Bowling for Bears bowl-a-thon will be held Dec. 6 at Cherry Hill Playdrome, 1536 N. Kings Highway.

Minimum sponsorship to cover the cost of one bear is required. Participation includes free bowling, food and beverages. RSVP requested but not required.

To make a donation, to get on the list to receive a sponsor sheet or for other information, send an e-mail to Jenny at [bowlingforbears@comcast.net](mailto:bowlingforbears@comcast.net).

in at her fifth Bowling for Bears event on Dec. 6, enabling more than 300 additional children to receive bears at holiday time

...at Monday am.

"The money will go directly to helping get bears to children in need," Jenn said. "Last year, we supplied 1,635 bears to local hospitals and shelters. It's such an honor to be recognized, and maybe being a Huggable Hero will help me publicize my next fundraiser."

It was 2005 when Jenny -- then a fourth-grader, but now an incoming eighth-grader at Cherry Hill's Rosa International Middle School -- launched her first bowl-a-thon. Motivated by the thought of children who were double victims of illness and Hurricane Katrina, she raised close to \$2,500 through sponsorships of a minimum of \$8, the cost for one bear. She, parents Jane and Sam, and older brother Dana stuffed them all at the Cherry Hill Mall Build-A-Bear store before sending them to Children's Hospital of New Orleans.

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jeaniebell77 wrote:

My son was a recipient of one of Jenny's bears. We celebrated his very first Christmas in a hospital room at CHOP. He was only 4 months old at the time. What a precious gift she provided not only to my son, but to me as well since I was with him in the hospital away from my two other children. Thank you Jenny for being such a compassionate and driven young lady! We will not only have the bear forever, but I will always remember waking up that Christmas morning to find Santa at our hospital room door bearing that unexpected gift.

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