

# Sharing with other kids

## Ten-year-old girl who has diabetes plans to give toys to medical facility

By Christena T. O'Brien  
Leader-Telegram staff

Instead of enjoying "High School Musical," then-9-year-old Katie Rhoten was rushed to a Florida hospital Jan. 23 during a family vacation to Disney World.

Even though the illness doesn't run in her family, Katie was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. In Type 1 diabetes, the body doesn't produce insulin, a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life.

While in the hospital, medical staff gave her a small toy or gift to help ease some of the fear and pain each time she received a shot.

"Each night I'd talk to my animals, and they'd tell me I was going to be OK," said Katie, who turned 10 on Jan. 4.



Everett

Before leaving the hospital, she decided she'd continue that kindness when she returned to Eau Claire.

During the past year, she and her mom, Kristin Everett,

have been browsing stores, picking up stuffed animals, games, fluffy hats, dolls, balls and other fun items for kids who might find themselves in a similar situation at Luther Midelfort.

"When I got Rufus (the stuffed bear with diabetes) and some other toys, I just knew I wanted to give back," said Katie, a fourth-grade student at Robbins School.

Katie is scheduled to donate six



Staff photo by Shane Opatz

Katie Rhoten of Eau Claire plans to donate toys today for children at Luther Midelfort. Diagnosed almost a year ago with Type 1 diabetes, Katie, a 10-year-old fourth-grade student, found herself comforted by little gifts while in the hospital.

boxes of toys to Luther Midelfort today after school.

Lisa Moelter, a registered nurse who has been Luther Midelfort's pediatric nurse coordinator for the last 10 years, said her gift will help other children.

Luther Midelfort often gives a blanket, stuffed animal or a toy to children (and their siblings) who are hospitalized, come in for some sort of treatment or outpatient procedure, or accompany a severely injured adult to the emergency department, she said.

“When I got Rufus (the stuffed bear with diabetes) and some other toys, I just knew I wanted to give back.”

— Katie Rhoten,  
10-year-old who has  
Type 1 diabetes

“They're scared and don't know what's going to happen, so those care items really provide a comfort,” said Moelter, who plans to tell children that the doll or toy she's giving them was donated by a little girl.

“What a wonderful thing,” Moelter said.

Everett and her husband, Doug Rhoten, couldn't be more proud of their daughter.

“Diabetes is a big part of her life, but it's not her entire life,” Everett said. “Through this whole thing, we've been really blessed, and our whole family (which includes Katie's 6-year-old brother, Spencer) wants to pay it forward. This is a way for her to do that.”

Katie also has become a bit of an advocate for diabetes awareness. She is one of three Wisconsin delegates named to the 2009 Kids Congress by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. She will visit Washington, D.C., in June and will go before Congress to testify about the need for continued funding for Type 1 diabetes research.

“If she can be an advocate for others, that's great,” Everett said.

O'Brien can be reached at 830-5838, 800-236-7077 or [christena.obrien@ecpc.com](mailto:christena.obrien@ecpc.com).