



## News

### Student makes giving a priority

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#### *Bradley Belcher wants to be a philanthropist*

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Bradley Belcher isn't sure what he wants to be when he grows up, but he knows one thing for sure — he is definitely going to be a philanthropist.

The 10-year-old Sweetser Elementary School student gave more than \$500 worth of supplies to First Light Child Advocacy Center of Grant County. The nonprofit agency provides a friendly atmosphere for children who are involved in abuse and neglect investigations.

As part of the Youth Grant Council, Bradley obtained a grant and was able to purchase a new toy box and rug for First Light.

He decided not to stop there.

"I was on the Youth Grant Council, and I helped First Light, and I liked it," Bradley said. "So when I gave them the money (for the rug and toy box), I asked what else they needed, and they said coloring books and crayons."

During a two-week period, Bradley asked his church members at Westminster Presbyterian Church to donate coloring books and crayons. He also asked congregation members to donate money during three services. He ended up collecting 34 books, 35 packs of crayons and almost \$500.

"They were just really happy," Bradley said, referring to the church members' reaction to his work. "Our church is about helping the community. They were happy to see me take part in the community, because it's usually an adult doing fundraisers."

Bradley then went to Wal-Mart and asked employees if they'd be willing to help, and the store gave Bradley a \$100 gift card. He said he was amazed at the response because he expected to get only 20 coloring books.

Since Bradley didn't think First Light would want \$500 worth of coloring books, he called to see what other supplies it needed. With the gift card, the money from the church members and a list of needed supplies, Bradley went shopping at Wal-Mart and bought school supplies, snacks and personal hygiene products. He said he was on a tight budget, so he tried to get supplies that were specifically for the children.

"It just felt so good to see the cart full of stuff overflowing," Bradley said. "It was just amazing."

The fourth-grade student is no stranger to charity work. He also had lemonade stands to raise money for Hurricane Katrina victims and helped raise money to save the Community Youth Outreach Center.

"The children in our community — if they're good, they'll become good adults — and if they're good adults, they'll become good workers and more good workers mean a better community," Bradley said.

Bradley's father, Michael Belcher, said his son realizes that not all kids are as fortunate as he is.



10-year-old Bradley Belcher receives a handshake and a big thank you from Janet Bailey, executive director of First Light Child Advocacy Center, after he delivered coloring books, crayons and needed supplies that he collected over the last couple of weeks. Photo by Elaine Moore [emoore@chronicle-tribune.com](mailto:emoore@chronicle-tribune.com).

"He's a mature kid who's got a huge heart, especially for kids, and he loves to help," Belcher said.

Bradley delivered the supplies to First Light on Thursday, on his 10th birthday.

"The best birthday present ever is helping others," he said. "I always say, 'Help others before yourself.'"

Janet Bailey, executive director of First Light, said the agency is always in need of supplies, which come from donations.

"You just expect to see this little boy in a three-piece suit sitting at a desk, as an executive," she said, referring to Bradley.

She said First Light already has cared for 28 more children this year than it had at this time last year, and more than 1,200 children have come through since it opened in February 2004.

"I wish there were more kids like you," she told Bradley on Thursday, shaking his hand.

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