

Book drive honors girl's memory

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Editor's note: This story was submitted by The Bay Net photographer Ron Bailey and information in the story was contributed by Evergreen Elementary School teacher Renee Gruber.

"Stories for Sofie" was created in honor of Sofie Turbush, a first grader at Evergreen Elementary School.

In March of 2014, Sofie was diagnosed with high grade anaplastic astrocytoma, a very rare and terminal brain cancer. Untreated, she would have lived somewhere between several months to 18 months. With treatment, the 5-year survival rate is around 10 percent.

Sofie lost her brave battle just three months after her diagnosis. She was 7-years-old.

In her memory, the Evergreen Elementary School community conducted a book drive this month to honor this special little girl for Christmas and what would have been her upcoming eighth birthday.

Sofie was an avid reader and writer, and we wanted to put books in the hands of as many kids as possible to share Sofie's enthusiasm for learning. The plan was to collect new and gently used books to donate to Georgetown University Hospital, where Sofie received treatment and care.

Through the outpouring of love, generosity, and support from the school community, over 2,000 books were collected in honor of Sofie.

Sofie's parents, Ed and Timea Turbush, and her teacher, Renee Gruber and her family, were able to donate the books not only to Georgetown University Hospital, but also to Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital in Towson, Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC and Philadelphia, St. Mary's Hospital in Leonardtown, University of Maryland Charles Regional in La Plata.

The books are being used as Christmas gifts for pediatric patients, in the playrooms and waiting rooms of the hospitals, and for future incoming patients. We are busy finding homes for the remainder of the books, and we are searching for hospitals, women and children's shelters, and other facilities that are in need of book donations. We have been so blessed to receive so many donations from our community, and we want to pay every bit of that generosity forward!

The excitement and gratitude of the hospitals was overwhelming. We were able to give a book to the mother of a newborn infant who was being admitted to Mt. Washington from another hospital just as we were delivering them. She was in tears at the gesture as she gratefully accepted the book on behalf of her premature son born just days before Christmas.

Thank you to everyone who donated to this cause. It's a good feeling to know that every little contribution added up to so many books. We hope that it will brighten the day of the patients who have to spend Christmas in the hospital. It is a small way to give back in honor of a little girl who brightened the lives of so many.

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