



## **Giant teddy bear to tour America this spring -8-foot replica of Nikki's Bear will raise awareness and funds for children's cancer**

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ST. LOUIS, MO (April 24, 2003) - Build-A-Bear Workshop® will bring to life a teenage girl's dream of making a difference for children with cancer with its sponsorship of a giant Nikki's Bear Tour across America this spring.

Nikki Giampolo was an honor student, musician and competitive athlete from Hebron, Conn., who died New Year's Day 2002 after a six-month battle with bone cancer. During the final months of her life, her wish was to create a program to raise awareness and funds for children's cancer. Working with her mother, Gail Giampolo, Build-A-Bear Workshop has made Nikki's dream come true with the Nikki's Bear Tour.

An 8-foot tall Nikki's Bear teddy bear will spread hope and courage across America this spring visiting local children's hospitals and malls. Scheduled stops include:

- April 24-27 - Los Angeles
- May 2-5 - St. Louis
- May 8-10 - Chicago
- May 14-15 - New York
- May 16 - Albany, NY
- May 17-18 - Boston
- May 19 - West Hartford, Conn.

Detailed information about the Nikki's Bear Tour schedule is available at [www.buildabear.com/aboutUs/Nikki/](http://www.buildabear.com/aboutUs/Nikki/). The bear is an exact replica of Nikki's Bear, a special teddy bear named in honor of Nikki Giampolo. Build-A-Bear Workshop introduced in January to raise money for the cause of children's cancer. A portion of the proceeds from the sales of each Nikki's Bear is donated to Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundation to help families of children with cancer. Since January, tens-of-thousands of Nikki's Bears have been purchased to help the cause of children's cancer.

"The Nikki's Bear tour takes the awareness and fundraising campaign we have created in our stores and puts those programs into action at a variety of locations across the country," said Build-A-Bear Workshop Chief Executive Bear Maxine Clark. "Cancer strikes 12,000 children every year. With this tour we want to convey Nikki Giampolo's courageous spirit to people across the country. We also hope to build on a kids helping kids movement for children's cancer we feel is percolating in schools and communities across the nation."

Encouraging kids to help other kids:

In West Hartford, the Nikki's Bear Tour will stop at Hall High School. In the fall of 2001, members of the Hall High School cross-country team were inspired by newspaper stories that detailed Nikki Giampolo's perseverance in her battle with cancer. Team-members raised money to help Nikki and sent it to her with instructions she was to spend the money on an item or activity she would enjoy. Nikki took the money raised

by the Hall High School cross-country team and visited a Build-A-Bear Workshop, where she made teddy bears for the nurses and doctors who were treating her cancer. This was the beginning of the kids helping kids movement Build-A-Bear Workshop is hoping to nurture with the Nikki's Bear Tour across America. This spring, Hall High School is engaged in a friendly fundraising competition with other area schools to raise funds for children's cancer research. Nikki's Bear is at the center of these efforts. "It seems like the right thing to do," said Sue Curnias, coach of the Hall High School cross-country team. "Children's cancer is so unfair. The team just wants to do our part to help kids who face this disease."

#### Raising awareness and funds:

The giant Nikki's Bear will stop at children's hospitals and malls as it makes its way across the country. At each stop, children's cancer awareness information will be distributed and purple, beary special hearts will be sold for \$1 to raise funds for treatment and research. On the back of each beary special heart, kids will be able to write get-well wishes and a message of hope to children who are battling cancer. The hearts will then be used to stuff the giant Nikki's Bear as it tours the country spreading hugs and warm wishes from coast to coast.

Beary special hearts also are being sold at all Build-A-Bear Workshop® stores nationwide. Proceeds from the sale of beary special hearts will be distributed by the Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundation to support cancer research and treatment programs. Gail Giampolo, Nikki's mother, hopes all children will benefit from this effort. "Nikki's Bear is a celebration of my daughter's life," said Gail. "One of Nikki's dreams was for Build-A-Bear Workshop to create a bear to raise awareness about children's cancer. Her wish has come true and I hope Nikki's Bear sends a message of love and courage to children with cancer everywhere."

Build-A-Bear Workshop® is an interactive, entertainment mall-based retailer that invites Guests of all ages to create their own customized stuffed animals. The company currently operates 110+ stores nationwide with a very successful e-commerce business, and will have 150 stores by end of 2003, including multiple locations across Canada. Build-A-Bear Workshop is the innovator and leader of the make-your-own-stuffed animal concept for mall-based retailing. The premier store opened in Saint Louis Galleria, St. Louis, Missouri, in October 1997. For more information, call (888) 560-BEAR or visit the company's award-winning Web site at [www.buildabear.com](http://www.buildabear.com). The Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundation is committed to improving communities and impacting lives through meaningful philanthropic programs that support causes for children and families. A portion of the proceeds from the sales of Nikki's Bear and affiliated programs will be distributed through the Build-A-Bear Workshop Foundation to help families of children with cancer.