



Build-A-Bear Workshop® Recognizes Houma, LA Teen as a Huggable Hero - Project FAME started by William Dunkelman

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ST. LOUIS, MO, (November 2004)- At the age of 14, William Dunkelman has already accomplished so much; more than many adults twice his age. While volunteering at local nursing homes, William came to understand that the pain the elderly endured was not just physical but came from a lack of emotional and intellectual stimulation. As a result he created Project FAME, Fine Arts Motivating the Elderly.

Build-A-Bear Workshop is honoring William as a Huggable Hero for his successful cause initiatives. During the past year, with the help of concerned citizens, groups and businesses, all recruited by William for Project FAME, more than \$30,000 worth of fine arts materials were donated to nursing homes in ten different states. His ambition and enthusiasm has been contagious, as William has recruited over 2000 youth and adults to assist with his cause. They have helped with everything from executing fine arts surveys to collecting and providing materials requested from those surveys. Additionally, they make special visits at nursing homes during the holiday season.

William, a 9th grader at Houma Christian School, battles an overly active immune disorder and has been diagnosed multiple times with shingles, thygesons and hyperhidrosis. "Diseases like shingles and thygesons are almost always characteristic of the elderly and it helped me understand some of the pains of aging," said William. "FAME was born during a visit to a nursing home when a resident became emotionally and intellectually stimulated as we shared a common interest in books. That following year I dedicated time to researching the need for fine arts programs in nursing homes."

William's work doesn't stop there. Not only does he spend countless hours with Project FAME, but he has also found time to raise and donate more than \$26,000 worth of toys, books and clothing to the impoverished in the Houma community. Marissa Bagala, a local teacher, nominated William for the Huggable Heroessm program. "As an educator, I am often faced with youth searching for a purpose in life. It is with hope that I have witnessed William serve as a role model for children who are seeking purpose. Truly, it is rare to meet such a motivated, caring young person. He allows us to look beyond the challenges our world faces today and recognizes the promise of tomorrow."

Build-A-Bear Workshop® created the Huggable Heroes program to recognize and honor young heroes across the country that have made a difference in their own neighborhoods, schools and communities by giving of themselves to others.

William is one of 10 exceptional children in addition to five outstanding groups of kids to be chosen as Huggable Heroes. This program is in its first year and is extremely important to Build-A-Bear Workshop. "We have always believed that it takes a village to raise a bear and these young people are shining examples of what hard work and commitment can accomplish. We are extremely proud of them, the leadership they have

demonstrated and the ways in which they have improved the lives of those in their community," said Maxine Clark, Founder and Chief Executive Bear of Build-A-Bear Workshop. "Each child and group presents an inspirational story, and along with those who nominated them, we are honored to be able to recognize their efforts and dedication to the causes and programs they have supported. They are all truly amazing."

William will be showcased nationally in the 2005 Build-A-Bear Workshop Huggable Heroes calendar, which will be available free in Build-A-Bear Workshop stores in late December. Build-A-Bear Workshop will make a donation to FAME in William's name and his achievements will be celebrated in his hometown.

About Build-A-Bear Workshop

Build-A-Bear Workshop is an interactive, entertainment mall-based retailer that invites Guests of all ages to create their own customized stuffed animals through an exciting bear-making process. The first store opened in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1997, and the company now operates over 160 locations in the USA with four stores in Canada. Build-A-Bear Workshop opened its first international store in Sheffield, England in the fall of 2003, recently opened stores in Japan, Korea and Denmark and plans to open its first store in Australia later this year, making it the global leader in the teddy bear business. Based on a survey compiled by Shopping Centers Today, a publication of the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC), Build-A-Bear Workshop was one of six retailers chosen and presented with the ICSC "2004 Hot Retailer Award". For more information on the company and its products call (877) 789-BEAR (2327) or visit the company's award-winning web site at www.buildabear.com.