



## **Build-A-Bear Workshop® Recognizes Irvine, CA Youth as a Huggable Hero**

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*10-year-old working to save endangered animals*

ST. LOUIS, MO, (November 2004)- Ten-year-old Dominique Loftus is working hard to protect endangered animals around the world. In recognition of this, Build-A-Bear Workshop has named Dominique a Huggable Hero.

Denise Reiss Loftus nominated her daughter for this award to honor and celebrate Dominique's passion for endangered animals. "I know she has truly cared more about this cause than I could imagine," she said. "She is a kind little girl with a very big heart."

Dominique, now a 5th grader at Hick's Canyon Elementary, grew up loving all types of animals and is already planning a safari vacation. "I've always loved animals, especially wild animals," Dominique said. "This year, two African explorers visited my classroom and I was very inspired. The more I learned about endangered animals, the more I wanted to do anything I could to save these animals."

She began raising money for wild animal foundations and created educational materials that engaged her classmates. She approached her principal about having a fundraising booth at her school's carnival using a power point presentation she developed herself. Inspired, her classmates, her parents and her principal jumped in to help. Dominique set up the Safari Endangered Animals Photo Booth and people were photographed with pictures of the animals she loves. All proceeds from the photo booth were donated to World Wildlife Fund (WWF) program "Pennies for the Planet."

"It was really neat because it looked like everyone was standing beside elephants, lions and other endangered animals," she said. "Although the carnival closed at 6:00 p.m., we stayed until 8:30 p.m. because there were so many people at our booth."

Her initial effort raised more than \$400, but Dominique is not resting on her laurels. "I am also planning on doing a summer bake sale to continue raising money," she said. She also plans to develop school programs with the explorers who visited her school to inspire more children and adults to help.

Build-A-Bear Workshop® created the Huggable Heroessm 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.

Dominique 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."

Dominique's mother agrees. "What a life lesson to learn that hard work and helping others less fortunate can result in many wonderful things," Denise said. "She truly has realized that she helped pay for safety measures to protect animals in real danger, and she's seen first hand that when you care and put those feelings into action, great things can happen. Some of those wonderful things are often unexpected, like being named a Huggable Hero."

Dominique 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, a World Wildlife Fund partner will make a donation to World Wildlife Fund in Dominique's name and her achievements will be celebrated in her 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](http://www.buildabear.com).