

## TEDDY BEARS CONQUERING FEARS!



Tabitha Hagen, a Travelling Nurse from Thunder Bay, Ontario, working at the Families, Children and Obstetrics Unit at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre, is helping children overcome fear, stress and anxiety during their hospital visit with gifting them a stuffed toy.

### **TEDDY BEARS CONQUERING FEARS There's 'Power' in those little stuffed toys!**

Travelling Nurse Tabitha Hagen from Thunder Bay, Ontario joined the Families, Children and Obstetrics Unit nursing staff at the Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor almost a year and a half ago.

She graduated from nursing in 2019 with pediatric training. She works with children from 6 months to 16 years of age as well as adult patients.

While on her first 3-month contract as a travelling nurse in Grand Falls-Windsor, Tabitha started working with children who were receiving blood work, IVs and various tests. She noticed how petrified the children were, even with their parent support. No matter how much she and the other nurses reassured them that everything will be fine, nothing was working to alleviate their fear, anxiety and stress.

She went out and bought some stuffed animals to give to the children she was working with on a trial basis. There was so much positive feedback that she approached the unit manager and received approval to bring in more stuffed toys.

She went to Walmart and filled her cart with stuffed animals; and when they were gone, she went back again. She has spent several thousand dollars on these stuffed toys and says every penny was worth it to be able to help a child through their hospital experience.

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When Tabitha feels a child could use a toy she don't just grab one from her bundle, she matches the child with their new toy by asking them what they like. She has an assortment to choose from – from kittens and puppies to unicorns and dinosaurs, and everything in between.

If the child is afraid they just squeeze and hug their stuffed toy, she explained. This is not only a positive emotional gift, according to Tabitha; it is also educational for the child. Nurses and/or a parent can use the stuffed toy to explain and show the child what they want to do, whether it's taking blood work, checking their breathing or placing an IV.

According to Tabitha all the nurses are on board with the stuffed toy initiative. So much so that several nurses, who are also Hockey Moms, organized a teddy toss at one of the hockey games. Tabitha said they came back to work with enough stuffed toys to last several months.

Tabitha is thrilled that her teddy bear initiative is helping young patients make it through stressful situations and happy and proud to make the hospital visit a little easier for children and their parents.

Tabitha finishes her travelling nurse contract with the province in a few months. But is only looking as far ahead as her next trip to Walmart for more teddies!

On behalf of all children and their families, the South and Central Health Foundation is presenting Tabitha with a Guardian Angel Pin to recognize how she is making a difference in the care our young patients are receiving when visiting the Families, Children and Obstetrics Unit.

Thank you Tabitha!



**If any individual, family, office group or organization would like to help Tabitha and the nurses continue with this teddy bear initiative, please reach out to our Executive Director, Wendy Houlihan @ [wendy.houlihan@centralhealth.nl.ca](mailto:wendy.houlihan@centralhealth.nl.ca) or call (709) 292-2393.**

## THERE'S MORE...

Not only has nurse Tabitha Hagen initiated a stuffed toy gift to children experiencing stress and anxiety during their hospital visit, she has adorned the walls of the Families, Children and Obstetrical Unit with framed Diamond Art pictures, creating displays around the unit to help relax visitors and patients.

