

## **Community helps Allie find new friend for Daisy – it's Donald**

### **Community with a Heart News**

Posted by:

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By Debbie Carson, Staff Writer

TEMPLE TERRACE — Five-year-old Allie Blain has been friends with Daisy for a couple of years now. But she knew that Daisy needed someone who was more like her to be her friend.

Daisy is a medical puppet living at All Children's Specialty Care of Tampa, a clinic on Bruce B. Downs Boulevard near Bearss Avenue.

A few months ago, Allie and her sister held a community fund-raiser at their church, First Baptist Church of Temple Terrace, hoping to come up with \$2,000 to buy Donald – a new friend for Daisy.

The community came out in droves and helped the girls raise well over their goal. They raised almost \$9,000.

"We jumped over that, skyrocketed!" said Allie and Abbie's mom, Renee Blain. Not only were they able to buy a boy puppet to help the children at the clinic, but also 100 miniature dolls like Donald that the pediatric patients can take home with them.

The puppets are used to help children understand what procedures the nurses and doctors are going to perform. The children "perform" the procedures on the puppets, which helps them cope with the situation.

"She's remarkable," said Dr. Kelly Sawczyn of Allie. Dr. Sawczyn has been one of the lead doctors taking care of Allie at the clinic.

Allie has a rare disease that causes her spleen to attack her blood platelets, which in turn, keeps her blood from clotting. If she were to take a stumble or otherwise get hurt, she could bleed to death. She will be attending kindergarten at her sister's school, Lewis Elementary, later this month – a feat her family was hopeful she'd be able to accomplish. Her medical condition made the situation iffy.

Allie threw a birthday party for Daisy last Friday, complete with a cake from Publix, which required Allie's mom to explain to the decorator who Daisy is.

As staff from the clinic stood with Allie, talking about Daisy's big day, Allie announced, "Now it's present time!"

She and her sister opened a large box marked "Patient Puppet" and pulled Donald out, showing him to Daisy.

“Yea!” Daisy shouted, in Allie’s voice.

Allie’s mom and the staff showed off the different things Donald can do – he has special knees, a bruise patch on his arm, and hair that can be removed.

Dr. Sawczyn said that Allie has taken her chronic illness in stride and has maintained a positive attitude throughout.

Kyleen Slater, a former Child Lift therapist at the clinic, met Allie more than a year ago.

As a therapist at the clinic, Slater introduced Allie to Daisy, showing Allie what the doctors were going to do.

“Daisy had such an impact,” Slater said.

After a while, Allie had a brainstorm and talked it over with Abbie and their mom. She wanted to get a friend for Daisy.

Allie and Abbie wanted to put on an art at their church and sell their work to raise the money.

Slater told Allie that Daisy cost a couple thousand dollars. Allie didn’t skip a beat.

“Oh, that’s going to be a lot of artwork,” Slater recalls Allie saying.

“There’s a determined spirit in her,” Slater said of Allie. For Allie, it was never a matter of could she raise the money – but a matter of how to do it.

“She’s so sure of herself and her ideas,” Slater said. “It’s infectious.”

Stemming from her foray into fund-raising for special causes, Allie and her family are focusing on creating a playground in Temple Terrace for children with special medical and physical conditions and considerations.

Renee plans to meet with city leaders later this month to discuss their options for locations.

“This is just a beginning for us,” Renee said, not of just the playground but also the puppets. The Blains are entertaining the idea of raising funds to buy more patient puppets for other clinics and hospitals that don’t have them.

“It’ll be cool to see what happens next,” Slater said.

#### **How to help:**

If you have any suggestions for potential sites for Allie’s park, e-mail Renee Blain at [CloudsOfHope@verizon.net](mailto:CloudsOfHope@verizon.net).

#### **Learn more**

You can learn more about Allie’s condition by visiting [www.CaringBridge.org/visit/allieblain](http://www.CaringBridge.org/visit/allieblain) and checking out [www.CloudsOfHope.org](http://www.CloudsOfHope.org), a Web site that Renee Blain created to spread the word about the non-profit organization that she created to not only help Allie but all children with similar illnesses.

**Allie and family say 'Thank you'**

Allie Blain and her family would like to thank the following businesses, groups and individuals who helped with their Friend for Daisy Fund-Raiser.

All Children's Specialty Care of Tampa

Durant High School Varsity Basketball Team

Success 101

First Baptist Church of Temple Terrace

Fast Track (First Baptist Children's Ministry)

Mark and Sheryl Greenlee

Miss Hoenge's second graders – Lewis Elementary

The Chris Kuti Band

Noah's Ark – Temple Terrace United Methodist Church

501st

Rebel Legion

The Salazar Family

The 360 Church – Sarasota

Thunderbug