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Mike Barrett/Metroland

Markham resident Erica Morris, pictured here with sister, Hannah, donated her birthday money to the Buy a Bear program. Her generosity is helping kids like Harish (left) and Harina Kannappan feel more at home during their stay at Markham Stouffville Hospital.



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FOR SAFETY REASONS, STROLLERS AND CAR SEATS CANNOT BE ACCOMMODATED.

Hospital's Buy a Bear campaign  
brings comfort to patients

AMANDA PERSICO  
apersico@yrmg.com

This holiday season give a warm and fuzzy gift.

The Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation launched a new campaign where patrons can purchase a snugly bear for a patient in the hospital and the funds go toward purchasing much needed, life-saving equipment for the hospital.

For a \$50, you can buy a teddy to put under a child's pillow at the hospital and help make their stay a little more bearable.

"I wanted to do something nice for other kids," said Erica Morris, 11, who donated \$400 to the Buy a Bear campaign.

"(Patients) feel bad, here. I want to help them feel better."

The Morris family

has a long history with Markham Stouffville Hospital making it the perfect choice for donations - Erica was born there and her father Brad Morris sits on the hospital foundation board of directors.

In lieu of birthday presents, the Markham resident asked friends and family to help her goal of helping those in the hospital, especially over the holiday season.

With the \$400, Erica was able to deliver eight bears; six to newborns and children in the pediatric centre and two to oncology patients.

Her donation is helping children like Harish Kannappan and his twin sister Harina.

Harish has spent close to a month in and out of the hospital for treatment. The bears were presented upon discharge from the hospital.

"The bear is something

that will stay with them forever," said Erica of the special going home gift. "It's like the bear I sleep with. It's something they can cherish and keep."

The Buy a Bear makes a great gift for a teacher, coach or for the person who has everything.

So far, the foundation has sold close to 50 bears dedicated to cancer patients at the hospital.

The Buy a Bear campaign fits with the hospital's existing family-centred approach to care - the Dr. Bear program.

The Dr. Bear program provides young patients with a hands-on exploration of medical equipment used and a tour of the operating and recovery rooms to help reduce stress associated with the child's hospital stay.

For more information or to purchase a bear, visit mshf.on.ca.