

## Crown Ace Hardware raises \$20k for CHOC Hospitals



Cashier Cheri Collette helps a customer at the Crown Ace hardware store in Lake Forest. The store brought in the most donations per transaction during the Champions Across America fundraiser that raises money for the Children's Miracle Network.



Breanna Weeks from CHOC Children's presents store manager Tom Marx with the Buzz Lightyear Traveling Trophy at his Crown Ace hardware store in Lake Forest. The store brought in the most donations per transaction during the Champions Across America fundraiser that raises money for the hospital.



Cashier Cheri Collette and store manager Tom Marx present a check to Breanna Weeks from CHOC Children's at the Crown Ace hardware store in Lake Forest. The store brought in the most donations per transaction during the fundraiser that raises money for the hospital.

BY ERIKA I. RITCHIE / THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

**LAKE FOREST** Megan Stephens never gave up.

Each time a customer came through her checkout line at Crown Ace Hardware in the Heritage Hill shopping plaza, she'd ask if they'd like to donate toward a campaign to raise money for the Children's Miracle Network that would benefit CHOC Children's in Orange and at Mission Hospital.

"I'd have streaks of 'no, no, no' and then streaks of 'yes, yes, yes,'" she said. "I was impressed by how many people had stories that directly related to the hospital. I had no idea how far it stretched."

At the end of the four week effort in October, the Lake Forest Crown Ace Hardware store had raised the highest percentage of donations from its sales among 17 stores in Southern California, 11 in Orange County.

Cumulatively, the 17 family-owned stores raised \$20,310.80 beating last year's \$18,714 and the first year's \$12,000. The effort is part of a national campaign of 4,500 stores that raises money for the Children's Miracle Network, a national organization founded in 1983 where fundraising goes directly to the local children's hospital, Breanna Weeks, manager of the organization said. On Wednesday staff at the Lake Forest store presented Weeks with the check and celebrated their efforts.

"We're fortunate to have a facility like CHOC," Mark Schulein, president of the 17-store Crown Ace Hardware chain said. "Everyone has been touched by a child's illness, whether it's their own or a friend's or someone they've heard about."

At the Lake Forest store nearly 2,000 customers donated pennies to \$10.

The \$20,000 will be used toward the hospital's greatest need. In past years the money has gone to equipment, cancer research and to help stock equipment in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Each year CHOC provides \$56 million of uncompensated care, Weeks said. About half of the hospital's patients are low-income or uninsured. Eighty percent of the children treated for cancer in Orange County are at either the Orange or Mission Hospital location, Weeks said.

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