

WEEK OF DECEMBER 16-22, 2010



A special gift

The joy of playing Santa to young cancer patients

Firethorne residents Kelli and Garrett Ashmore, above, shown with their daughters Erika, 3, and Kiersten, 2, started the “Stuff the Sleigh” toy drive to provide Santa with toys for cancer patients at Texas Children’s Hospital.

Katy residents 'Stuff the Sleigh'

By **KIM MORGAN**

CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT

Katy residents **Garrett** and **Kelli Ashmore** are the brains behind the beauty of Stuff the Sleigh, a cause benefiting Texas Children's Hospital cancer patients and their siblings.

The Ashmores knew they wanted to do something for kids, but they weren't sure what.

After mulling it over, they decided to focus on kids with cancer.

"Something like cancer is completely out of the control of innocent children and their parents," said Garrett, who has two young daughters.

"It's not something you can dictate or control. Being a parent, it does hit you a little bit harder when you hear about kids with cancer. It makes you think."

Those interested in participating in the drive are invited to visit Firethorne

Community Center, 28128 North Firethorne Road, to select a gift card from a life-size sleigh.

Each card contains a wish-list item from pediatric cancer patients or their siblings.

"Siblings don't get the attention they used to after their brother or sister got sick," Kelli said.

"Maybe they even have to take on a more responsible role, helping with the other kids.

"That's why we're also doing this for the families."

Katy residents **Missy** and **Dan Geddes** appreciate that.

"We definitely have a heart for families with kids with cancer," Missy said.

Their 7-year-old son **Gage** has battled brain cancer twice. The cancer is now in remission.

"You just don't have the capacity to even think about the next hour, the next minute, when a child is sick," said Missy, who has three more

children ranging age from 4 to 11.

"Now we can help these kids. We can't make all their wishes come true, but we can sure love on the families."

Garrett said the community seems to be on board with the effort.

Cinco Charities, a non-profit organization created by Keller Williams Realty Katy, has adopted the project as its official Christmas toy drive, and students at Odessa Kilpatrick Elementary School in Katy have already raised \$1,500.

Any cash remaining after wish-list toys are purchased will be put towards gas and grocery gift cards for parents.

The drive will wrap up with a party for the kids and their families the week before Christmas. Santa Claus will, of course, hand out the gifts.

"Through the process of giving and helping," Garrett said, "we all get the spirit and true meaning of Christmas."