

CMHA'S YOUTH TEAM UP WITH BUILD-A-BEAR FOR SERVICE PROJECT AT RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

By Terell Simon, GS:TAG student

On January 28, 2010, CMHA's GS:TAG students planned and executed one of their most fulfilling service projects this school year. They were inspired to do something passionate for the Ronald McDonald House (RMH) children and families, so they teamed up with Build-A-Bear. The students met with representatives of the organization and discussed with them their mission, their desire to make an impact on the world and specifically their desire to serve and touch the hearts of the kids at RMH.

"We had a vision to give stuffed animals to children and Build-A-Bear came through," said Ebony Watkins, GS:TAG student and junior at East Tech High School. "It was an amazing experience to be with the RMH kids."

The students learned everything they could about RMH so they could be prepared and know what to say and do for the children at the event. On the day of the event, the students gave out 40 teddy bears wearing GS: TAG t-shirts, but they didn't stop there.

The GS:TAG students did everything from sanitizing toys to doing the laundry and cooking. This project was special because not only did the kids walk away with bigger smiles and hearts, but so did the students. The student group plans to do more projects like this one in the near future.

"This was a wonderful opportunity to give back," said Shraine Newman, GS:TAG Coordinator. "Random acts of kindness are contagious and make people want to do even more. I have a feeling our students are going to be coming back here again. I'm very proud of them for their generosity."

Formerly known as Do the Right Thing, GS:TAG is a youth employment and leadership program, which has been part of CMHA for more than 17 years. Students participating in the program gain experience working in an office environment while also attending field trips and participating in a structured program which helps them develop leadership skills, a strong work ethic and critical thinking skills.