

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

3rd Grader Sews 40 Stuffed Animals to Deliver to Homeless Children on Christmas Eve

FORT WORTH (December 19, 2018) – Keller third grader Stella Austin combines her talent for sewing and her passion for helping others by creating cute stuffed kittens to give to children in need. She will be gifting 40 of her handmade creations at **10 a.m. on Christmas Eve** morning to children staying at **The Salvation Army's Mabee Social Service Center in Fort Worth**.

Stella learned to make the stuffed animals after receiving a sewing machine for Christmas last year. She is excited to share the toys with other kids.

"They just need a little cat to cuddle with so they don't feel alone and scared," says 9-year-old Stella, who attends Heritage Elementary in Keller. She has already gifted 70 stuffed animals for hospitalized children.

Shannon Austin, Stella's mother, says that making the stuffed kitties has become a family project.

"Stella sews, I stuff, her dad cuts out the patterns, and our youngest gives each one a little kiss so they have extra love," Shannon said.

Volunteering with The Salvation Army is also a family affair – Stella's grandfather, Larry Stone, serves on The Salvation Army's Tarrant County Advisory Council.

New stuffed animals are always a welcome gift at The Salvation Army's Mabee Center, where 40-50 children often stay overnight in the emergency shelter.

"When a family comes to us that's newly homeless, many times they'll arrive with nothing except the clothes they are wearing," The Salvation Army's Mabee Center Executive Director Beckie Wach said. "We like to be able to give them something they can hang on to. Many of our clients are running from a domestic violence situation, so they may come here with nothing."

Anyone who would like to donate new stuffed animals for the children may drop them off at The Salvation Army's Mabee Center, 1855 E. Lancaster Avenue, which is open 24 hours, seven days a week. Another great donation idea is a twin-sized "bed in a bag" set, which typically includes a comforter and sheet set. These are given to children upon their arrival at the shelter.

The Mabee Center serves as an emergency family shelter to assist homeless parents with children. Last year, the shelter served 411 women and 722 children in this capacity. In addition, the center's First Choice program houses mothers and children in a 12-month residential addiction recovery program.

NOTE TO THE MEDIA: You are invited to join us for the children's Christmas Eve party at

the The Salvation Army's Mabee Social Services Center at 10 a.m. on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24, and visit with Stella as she shares her Christmas kitten gifts with the children. Please let us know if you plan to attend by texting Pat Patey at 214-XXX-XXX. Photos of Stella and some of her stuffed kitties are available for download here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fkzlhhozmmr8jj4/AACnfcMZ3L1e7p9YYpejb3Gza?dl=0>

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