

## Lamplighter student delivers hurricane relief to East Coast victims



PHOTOS: STEVE WRUBEL

Lamplighter first-grader Stella Wrubel visits with firefighters from Ladder 101 in New York, where she delivered funds she raised to benefit Hurricane Sandy victims.

# Golden Child Helps Red Cross Efforts

BY CAITLIN ADAMS  
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While her classmates were writing letters to the North Pole, pint-sized Stella Wrubel's attention was set in a different direction. Stella, a first-grader at the Lamplighter School, was watching the news surrounding Hurricane Sandy when she grew concerned for her godfather, a resident of New York City.

"I said, 'What can I do?'" she recalled. "I was worried about him."

Turns out, she could do a lot.

Stella and her family recently returned from a trip to New York City, where she hand-delivered a \$2,000 check to the American Red Cross and Friends of Firefighters to go toward the



Stella raised the \$2,000 by selling mistletoe.

victims of Hurricane Sandy.

But let's rewind to where it all began.

After Stella expressed concern, her parents, Lucy and Steve, told her no

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one was too young to lend a hand.

Stella, a seasoned veteran of lemonade stands, knew she could capitalize on her sales expertise, but she wanted to sell something that captured the season.

"I'm like, 'I don't want to sell lemonade at Christmas,'" Stella said.

Her family put their heads together and settled on mistletoe, a decoration that everyone could embrace regardless of religious belief.

The entire Wrubel clan spent Thanksgiving trimming trees on their ranch's "mistletoe row," tying bows and bells onto wispy bundles, and separating the branches into piles based on price.

On her first weekend, Stella sold bundles of the smooching plant in front of her house. The inventory sold out in a matter of 30 minutes, and the next weekend was the same story.

When Stella ran out of the holiday staple, neighbors trimmed their trees and gave her the inventory. And when that bunch sold, Stella set her sights on the shrubs that dotted the Dallas Country Club's lawn. She called in her grandparents, Jennie and Stuart Reeves, for reinforcement, and boxes filled to the brim with mistletoe lined the Wrubels' yard within the hour.

Her final weekend proved to be the most successful. She had a change of venue thanks to Brian Bolke, who owns Five

and Ten in Highland Park Village, as well as the shopping center's Number One. He stepped in and let the bubbly first-grader sell her goods in the heart of the village.

Classmates were coming out of the woodwork to lend a hand, and everyone from stroller-pushing moms to last-minute shoppers wanted a bundle of their own.

On that final weekend of sales, Stella's profits doubled, and by the time Sunday rolled around, she had raised \$2,000.

But she didn't stop there.

Stella and her parents boarded a plane to New York City to see exactly where the funds were going.

In between taking in the Broadway revival of *Annie* and a visit to the American Museum of Natural History, Stella toured the Red Cross headquarters and spent time at Brooklyn's Ladder 101, a firehouse that lost seven first responders on 9/11.

The firefighters, who had to work in a station under 5 feet of water during Hurricane Sandy, let her try on their equipment and posed for pictures.

"They just welcomed me very warmly," Stella said.

Once Stella returned to Dallas, she received a token of appreciation from the Red Cross in the form of a certificate that she plans to hang on her wall.

Next year, Stella plans to mobilize her troops for a second time and raise funds for the same organizations.

Because, as Stella put it, "They're always going to need it."

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