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LOCAL BOY REACHES GOAL OF 1,000 BEARS FOR NEEDY CHILDREN

Union Township (December 12, 2009) –At 5:50 p.m. on Saturday, December 12, Justin Martin of Union Township stuffed the 1,000th bear for a needy child.

Since September, the 7-year-old has been spending nearly every weekend at Build-A-Bear in Bridgewater stuffing and dressing bears so they can be given to sick and needy children throughout New Jersey. Thanks to Justin's tireless efforts, generous private donations and the help of other kids, Justin reached his goal of 1,000 bears, exceeding the 850 stuffed animals given last year.

The bears will be transported to various agencies including the Newark Housing Authority, Beth Israel Hospital and the Division of Youth and Family Services, which will then give the stuffed animals to the children this month.

Justin also realized his goal of getting the community more involved in his Bear Drive. Several Garden State children donated and helped stuff bears including:

- A group of preschoolers and their moms in Somerset County who had their own charity party where the kids each stuffed a bear to donate
- A Somerset County girl and her friends who made centerpieces out of Build-A-Bear animals for her Bat Mitzvah celebration and later gave the bears to Justin

“I want more children to help build the bears, to show them the importance of giving and sharing,” said Justin Martin in September.

Justin has had his own bear since he was born but when he was 5 ½ years old he realized not all children had bears like him so he wanted to change that, said his father, Quin. So Quin created The Justin Charity Bear Fund, a nonprofit to collect money to build the bears, and they partnered with the Newark Housing Authority to distribute the majority of them last year.

Although Justin has reached his goal for this year, his father said that as long as donations keep coming they will continue to stuff as many bears as they can to give to other children this season. Donations can be made online to The Justin Charity Bear Fund via its website www.justinbearfund.weebly.com, by mail (192 Wilson Avenue, Suite 262, Newark, NJ 07105) or by stopping by the Bridgewater Build-A-Bear location. The money received goes to creating the bears, which will be distributed just before Christmas.

Major sponsors include: Bridgewater Build-A-Bear, HM/Glopak Charity Foundation, Newark Housing Authority, Newark Mayor Cory Booker, Newark Now, Trenk Law Firm, Constellation Energy & T. Farese & Sons Hauling.

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