



JIMMY LAROUE/SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

From left: Adrienne Miller, Morgan Holloman, Kier Holland and Pamela Munden-Orr help collect stuffed animals to give to children at Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters.

# Sending bear hugs to kids at CHKD

**BY JIMMY LAROUÉ**  
STAFF WRITER

Adrienne Miller said the idea to collect stuffed animals to give to kids at Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters was one that God dropped on her heart.

So naturally, she collected about 150 of them over the

past two weeks to give to the hospital for Valentine's Day.

Miller, a Suffolk resident and ACCESS College advisor at King's Fork High School, was at Ryan's Steaks and Cakes downtown to get the last of the donated stuffed animals before taking them to CHKD.

Though many donations come around Christmas,

Miller wanted to make sure children received something at a different point in the year to help comfort them during their hospital stays.

"Sending bear hugs was my theme," Miller said. "And I was like, next time, the next holiday is Valentine's Day. Why not, with everything going on with the children and

what's going on with children in reference to COVID, I was like, what better time?"

Miller said she had been at CHKD in September when a newborn grandson of hers was there for treatment and she saw children that, despite being in the hospital, were experienc-

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# Hugs: Valentines for kids at hospital

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ing joy and playing, and it touched her heart to do something to spread more joy to them.

“I’m just looking around and it was just overwhelming because it’s so many,” Miller said, “but these kids were resil-

ient.”

She had dozens of stuffed animals at Ryan’s from ones that were dropped off, and she had already collected about another 40 that were on her couch at home. Others had been calling her with

more stuffed animals they wanted to donate, while some former students of hers have sent her money to help collect even more.

Those who donated stuffed animals were entered into a drawing to win a meal at Ryan’s.

“I just wanted to do something,” Miller said. “And why not a bear? You know, something that they can have, something that’s tangible that they’ll be able to have and to hold.”

# 'Taylor'-made to be queen

**BY JIMMY LAROUÉ**  
STAFF WRITER

It was hard to tell who was more nervous before and during the 2022 Suffolk Peanut Fest Queen's Banquet and Fashions — Taylor Rockett, or her mother Tiffany.

While mom's nerves showed as she didn't eat anything throughout the day and during the banquet, Taylor said she was more nervous because she had to go on stage in front of the large crowd in attendance at the Hilton Garden Inn-

Suffolk Riverfront.

For Taylor, 17, a senior at Suffolk Christian Academy, those nerves didn't show, as she was crowned Suffolk Peanut Fest Queen Wednesday.

"I was a little nervous, and I wasn't expecting this at all," Taylor said, "but it was really amazing to get this honor to be the queen of the Suffolk Peanut Festival for 2022."

Taylor was one of six princesses in the running for queen, all

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Taylor

# Queen: Essay on grandfather's military service

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high school seniors, and also included Page Henry (Nansemond-Suffolk Academy), Emma Rotzler (Lakeland High School), Anna Gomer (King's Fork High School), Gabriella Federici (Nansemond-Suffolk Academy) and Kendal Legg (Suffolk Christian Academy).

Each participating princess was nominated by her school based on a creative essay interpreting the festival theme, "Broad Stripes, Bright Stars, Patriotic Guitars: A Tribute to Our Hometown Heroes and the Red, White and Blue." It also factors in academic success, extracurricular activities, awards, achievements and community involvement.

Taylor's essay focused on the military service of her grandfather, and after she was crowned, she read the essay to the audience.

"When it comes to hometown heroes, my grandfather comes to my mind," Taylor said as she read from her essay. "He served in the Navy from Aug. 26, 1978 until retirement in June of 2000."

In her essay, Taylor wrote about the men and women who put their lives at risk through their military service, calling on people to not forget those who died in that service and to remember the U.S. flag.

She said the festival's theme this year "hits home for me as a granddaughter of a veteran who has served this great nation."

Answering the questions was the most challenging for Taylor, citing the big audience in trying to stay focused. Her ques-

tion asked her to recount a time when she overcame defeat.

"A time that I overcame defeat was when I decided to play basketball for the first time, and it was very nerve-racking because I was going against other athletes who had more experience than me, and I had to learn everything from the beginning, such as all the calls and plays and all of the defensive and offensive skills. That was a time that I overcame defeat." Taylor said.

Taylor said some of her favorite memories from previous Peanut Fest's include watching fireworks with her friends, many of which she's had since she began kindergarten at SCA, getting to spend quality time with them outside of school and trying out the unique and different food.

Taylor said a friend encouraged her to partic-

ipate to have the experience, and that experience turned into something more.

"I never expected to be queen out of this," Taylor said. "I was happy with being princess, but I was just thrilled to be the queen."

Mom was beaming after her daughter was crowned queen, but her nerves still hadn't settled enough to eat.

"I'm extremely proud," Tiffany Rockett said. "Overwhelming to say the least, just a great experience, just taking it all in one step at a time."

Taylor said she would savor the experience during Peanut Fest, to be held Oct. 6-9.

"It's going to be amazing," Taylor said. "It might be a little overwhelming, but I'm just going to speak to everyone and greet them, and serve my city."



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# 'Dig in' to Suffolk's first seed library

**BY MEGAN TAYLOR**  
STAFF WRITER

If you're heading down Meadow Country Road in southern Suffolk, you may notice a new addition to the area. Carrie Matsko, her hus-

band, Eric, and their four children have created Suffolk's first seed library.

She was inspired by the neighborhood book libraries she visited growing up and

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# Seeds: Suffolk family cultivates community

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wanted to create the same kind of community using her love for gardening.

Carrie grew up in Danville, Iowa, and moved to the area in 2011 after graduating from Regent University, where she completed a master's in cinema television production.

"I've always loved gardening. I may not have always been good at it, but I've always enjoyed it," she said. "My dad was always a gardener and we spent a lot of time at his parents' farm, so I guess it's in my DNA."

The seed library, located at 2025 Meadow Country Road, got started in early April about a month after Carrie came across someone selling a "little library" on Facebook Marketplace.

"It was brand new, someone had commissioned it but never installed it because they were moving," she explained.

The idea behind the seed library was to build a community of local gardeners who can use the library to expand their own gardens while helping others do the same.

"Our mission is to cul-



tivate community and expand local gardens," Carrie said.

So far, the library has seen a few people deposit seeds and has received recognition in the form of a seed shipment from Bakers Creek Heirloom Seeds in Missouri.

"It's just growing and I love it," Carrie said. "It's just the start of my little dream."

In addition to the library, Carrie also runs a Facebook page where she shares advice on when, where and how to plant and care for different seeds.

"I read recently that

scientists discovered that stirring up soil releases microbes that stimulate serotonin production. This basically means that gardening can reduce anxiety and promote happy feelings. Just another benefit to digging in," she said.

For anyone who loves gardening or anyone who may be trying it for the first time, the seed library is a great way to get your hands on some seeds and be part of a community that shares your interest.

To learn more about the seed library or to donate seeds, visit the Meadow Country Farmette Facebook page.

SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The seed library was hand painted by Carrie Matsko after she purchased it from a seller on Facebook Marketplace.

