

By **Neil Zolot**/ Correspondent
Thursday, September 14, 2006

Sixth-grader Stephanie Lundgren has donated \$500 to [Why Me](#), a non-profit organization that provides support for families with children with cancer. The money, presented by check at the School Committee meeting last Thursday night, represents the net profit from her own business making belts, headbands and tote bags.

Lundgren started the work as part of a school project. When classmates and teachers expressed interest in her products, she struck out on her own. Initial sales were generated through word of mouth and at a party for customers, which spread the word even more. She said it's not unusual for her to see groups of friends or mothers and daughters walking around wearing some of the 200 "units" she's sold. Almost all are reversible, with some of the headbands having a plastic spine and some not. Between school, work and practicing piano, flute, soccer and kung fu, Lundgren is pretty busy.

Lundgren knew about [Why Me](#) through her father, David, who has run marathons to raise money for the group.

"That was the connection," she said.

Through business connections, David, a self-employed financial researcher, knew [Why Me](#) founder and volunteer executive director Terry Shepherd, who works as a CPA and founded Why Me in 1985 after his daughter had died from cancer.

"This is particularly special; the family has helped us out for a while," Shepherd said as he accepted the check with tears in his eyes. "We've had some other kids who've helped us. To me, it's most precious when children help other children. They're learning how to give. A lot of adults don't get to that point."

Although Stephanie has stopped making the time-consuming tote bags, she's expanding her line to include watchbands and baby accessories like burp cloths, which can be viewed at www.sweetpeastephie.com. As she makes more money, Stephanie is planning on making more donations to [Why Me](#).

"I'm looking forward to giving a lot of money to them," she said.

"The more she makes the more she'll give to Why Me," added mother Karen, a stay-at-home mom for Stephanie and two sons, seventh-grader Eric and 4-year-old Gavin.



Stephanie Lundgren, center, poses with proud parents David and Karen after the local sixth-grader was honored for turning a school project into a \$500 donation to Why Me, a non-profit organization that provides support for families with children with cancer.

School Committee member Rob Dana met Stephanie at a Little League baseball tournament in Cooperstown, N.Y. near the Baseball Hall of Fame. His son is a teammate of Stephanie's brother, Eric.

"I was talking to her about school, and this came up," Dana recalls. "For an 11-year-old to take the initiative and grow a class project to the point where she's donating money to the charity of her choice says something about the type of kid she is. The fact she can do that and come before the School Committee to explain it is unbelievable. I was very impressed by her poise before the committee."

Ultimately, Stephanie wants to follow her father into his profession.

"I want to do what he does," she said. "He's taught me a lot about it."