

Frankfort Faces: Kyra Walling



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Kyra Walling, 5, talks to her two turtles, Sprinkle and Tuck, and her three fish, Hello Kitty, Rainbow and Melody, at her Frankfort home.

HALF-PINT HELPER

5-year-old has worked for more causes than most adults

BY JORDAN SMITH

STATE JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

When Kyra Walling asked for luggage as a gift from her parents, she had good reason.

It wasn't because the 5-year-old wanted something pink and sparkly to tote her toys. When you've got plans to move to Paris to become a musketeer, a suitcase or two will be required, she figures.

And when she asked her friends to bring paper towels, laundry detergent and dog treats to her 5th birthday party, it wasn't because she wanted to play an elaborate game of house. Instead

of gifts for herself, Kyra decided that the animals at L.I.F.E. House could use a hand more than she could use some new Barbies.

When this girl has a plan, move aside.

Since Kyra could walk and talk, says her mother, Jennifer Walling, her daughter has used that drive to log more volunteer hours than most adults even think about.

Salvation Army? The brown-haired, doe-eyed bundle of energy was the cutest bell ringer the organization had last year.

Americorps? She built beds for underprivileged

kids in Lexington ("I even got to carry some nails not in a box or anything!").

Kentucky Book Fair? She has unpacked books and passed out pens since she was 3.

So how does a girl mere weeks past 4 decide she wants to become Frankfort's half-pint helper extraordinaire?

In Kyra's case, it starts at home.

Jennifer, who is currently a case manager at the Blue Grass Community Action Partnership, has always been involved in community service.

Since Kyra's birth she's

worked at the Franklin County Women's Shelter, Franklin County Council on Family Abuse, Franklin County Drug Court and more.

She has also been a board member of the Simon House and Frankfort Independent Schools and volunteered for the United Way, Kentucky Book Fair, Americorps Build-a-Bed, Salvation Army, Simon House and Bowl For Kids Sake.

Jennifer says her family also donates to the Kings Center, food pantry, Sunshine Center and American Cancer Society.

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Kyra Walling, 5, hugs her 2-year-old dog, Spencer.

HELP | Giving parents encourage daughter's pursuits

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"I've always been a strong advocate of volunteering, and I guess I'm instilling it in her a little bit too."

A little bit might be an understatement. When Kyra would play "mom," Jennifer recalled, the then 3-year-old would run from room to room announcing, "The shelter needs me!"

Ultimately, Jennifer says she and her husband, Kip, just want Kyra to understand that people in her community need help, something even a little girl can give.

"A lot of times I'll just say, 'Hey Kyra, Mom heard about this, would you like to do it?' But if she doesn't want to, we don't force her. Whatever she's interested in, we'll find a way to do it."

Today, that interest is animals, hence the birthday donations.

"I just liked them forever, and some animals, it's a long

time until they get owners," Kyra said about her decision to give to L.I.F.E. House.

Two turtles (Sparkle and Sprinkle or Tuck and Sprinkle, depending on when you ask), numerous fish (whose names change hourly) and a dog benefit from Kyra's care in the Walling's quiet west Frankfort home.

And while birthday number six is still more than 11 months away, Kyra already has big plans for her party.

"We're going to help the zoo next time," she says.

"We'll have to figure that one out," Jennifer added, noting that it might be hard to be hands on when helping such a big organization.

"Oh wait, I meant the Game Farm," Kyra corrected.

"Now that's doable," said Jennifer with a smile.

Very doable. But then again, most things are when you're the girl with the plan.

