

Sisters work to collect toys for children at the hospital

by Kathleen Ostroot

Olivia Maccoux, 10, and her sister Traci, 16, of Brooklyn Park joined forces for a toy drive for St. Paul Children's Hospital.

After many hospitalizations, the pair decided something had to be done to make more toys available to the patients.

The sisters have spent many hours in hospitals as patients and visitors.

Olivia was born at only 29 weeks, which caused a blood vessel to bleed in her brain and later develop into hydrocephalus. This condition requires a ventricular shunt, a tube inside her body that drains fluid from her brain to be absorbed in her abdomen. Her first shunt was placed at 10 months and she has had complications that required more than 60 brain surgeries. In addition she had mild cerebral palsy and has undergone surgery to correct rotation of the bones in her legs.

Her sister Traci was diagnosed four years ago with

Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy (RSD), which is a painful nerve and muscle disorder that requires a spinal cord stimula-

tor implant to manage the pain.

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Olivia Maccoux, 10, joined forces with her sister Traci for a toy drive for St. Paul Children's Hospital after both have spent a lot of time in hospitals.

She is pictured here with the toys she has received as donations from businesses, friends and family.

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She is a member of the youth advisory council at Minneapolis Children's Hospital (where she receives treatment), which meets one time a month to make suggestions about making a hospital stay a more positive experience.

Champlin Park High School Spanish teacher and friend Susan Germanson described the family as "pillars of strength, resilient, strong, compassionate, humble saints, gracious and possessing a great sense of humor."

The idea started when Olivia went to play a board game at the hospital and some of the pieces were missing, then she tried another game and pieces were missing at

that game. She decided to have a toy drive.

She and her sister Traci designed and printed a colorful brochure called Olivia's Hospital Toy Drive. In the brochure, Olivia writes, "Have you ever tried to put a puzzle together with half the pieces missing or played a game with no game pieces? This is what happens to me when I am in the hospital."

Both girls saw a huge need at the children's hospital.

"Being a patient at children's hospital is not always fun. But, if there are toys to play with it helps the days pass," said Olivia.

To donate contact Dan and Cathy Maccoux at 424-7940.