

VARGHESE SUMMERSETT

INJURY LAW GROUP

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Athena Strand at Cook Children's, September 2022

MATTEL DONATES 2000 BARBIES TO COOK CHILDREN'S MEDICAL CENTER IN MEMORY OF ATHENA STRAND

FORT WORTH - Mattel donated 2000 Barbies and other toys to Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth on Thursday in honor of 7-year-old Athena Strand.

Athena was kidnapped and killed by a FedEx driver delivering a package of "You Can Be Anything Barbies" to her father's home in Wise County. After hearing about the tragedy, Mattel contacted Varghese Summersett Injury Law Group, which is representing Athena's mother, Maitlyn Gandy.

"Mattel wanted to make a Barbie donation in honor of Athena," said Benson Varghese, Managing Partner of Varghese Summersett Injury Law Group. "We asked Maitlyn if she had someplace in mind, and she immediately said 'Cook Children's Medical Center.' Of course, it made perfect sense when she told us her reason."

In September, Athena became ill and was hospitalized for three days at Cook Children's Medical Center. During her time there, she was given a pink "Prayer Bear." The Prayer Bear brought her joy and quickly became her favorite stuffed animal. The Prayer Bear was in Athena's pink coffin during her funeral service last month.

By selecting Cook Children's as the recipient of Mattel's Barbie and toy donation, Maitlyn hopes thousands of children will feel the same joy the Prayer Bear gave her daughter.



On Thursday, Maitlyn and her legal team helped a six-person group from Mattel set up Barbies and toys for a "You Can Be Anything" event organized by Cook Children's Medical Center. Afterward, Maitlyn interacted with the patients as they came down to select a toy, have a snack, and complete crafts that focused on the children's future and goals.

"This was a special event in memory of my daughter," Maitlyn said. "I'm grateful for everyone who helped make it happen."

Megan Hodges Cook, Community Program Coordinator at Cook Children's, said Thursday's event was incredibly important to the emotional well-being of the patients and families they serve.

"The generosity of Maitlyn and Mattel is overwhelming," said Hodges Cook. "Mattel provided all of our patient's favorite toys, including Barbies that represent all of the different patients we serve, Little People, Imaginext dinosaurs, Hot Wheels and even a Fisher Price cell phone toy for infants and toddlers!"

"They did not leave a single child's age or interests unaccounted for, and they brought our most needed toys. In serving our patients, it is not unusual for us to distribute 50-100 Barbies every month, hundreds of Hot Wheels cars, and 40 or more hand-held infant toys every month. I can't even imagine the

number of patients that will be touched by the donation Mattel made in honor of Athena. It is truly amazing.”

Nancy Molenda, Executive Director of the Mattel Children’s Foundation, said their purpose is to empower the next generation to explore the wonder of childhood and “reach their full potential.”

“We are honored to be part of this event and to help bring the power of play to the patients of Cook Children’s,” she said.

Cook Children’s media team took photos and videos of the event, which the media is welcome to use and disseminate. Here is the link to the DropBox: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/s9lzngwl5subtw94/AACZPyLABsMZWR_DR7pOnd4Ka?dl=0

[Varghese Summersett Injury Law Group](#) is a Fort Worth-based personal injury firm dedicated to helping individuals and families who have been victimized due to the negligent or wrongful actions of others. The firm has a Media Relations Director to assist members of the media with questions, statements, and interview requests.

Please direct all contact regarding this case to Melody McDonald Lanier at 817-203-2220 (office), 817-821-3935 (cell), or melody@versustexas.com.

Information about the events and information on the Athena Strand case can be found at versusinjury.com/answers-for-athena.

