

# Teddy bear program helps children in hospital cope

LANCASTER — New Connections Community Church recently donated 25 teddy bears to the Fairfield Medical Center Emergency Department as part of a new program called Tender Loving Bear in memory of Michelle Black.

Black was an avid collector of bears, which helped her get through the many years she spent in the hospital battling diabetes.

"After her passing, the church helped us set up a memorial fund in her memory because we wanted to do something to bring a little comfort to children that are ill," said Kathleen Black-Duffus, Black's mother-in-law.

Melinda Van Buren, Emergency Department assistant manager, was present the day the bears

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**MELINDA VAN BUREN**

Emergency Department assistant manager

arrived.

"I can't say enough about how much of an impact this donation will have on children that we see in the Emergency Department," Van Buren said. "We are very grateful for this program and know the difference it makes to help them cope."

The program will provide a teddy bear for each child who needs care around Valentine's Day and thereafter. This date was chosen because Black's birthday was Feb. 14. She

was 37 years old when she died.

"We are looking forward to carrying on Michelle's memory by donating bears to Fairfield Medical Center each year on this date in hopes of making children feel more at ease," Black-Duffus said.

Donations are accepted through the Fairfield Medical Center Foundation. For more information or to donate to the Fairfield Medical Center Foundation, call (740) 687-8107.



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