



## MIDDLETOWN TEENS MAKE SEMI-FINALS IN BUILD-A-BEAR'S HUGGABLE HEROES PROGRAM

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Rosetta Key Reporting

A bright idea could earn a Monmouth County teenager Build-A-Bear Workshop's Huggable Heroes title this June. The program honors young people making a difference in their communities and the world.

17-year-old Paula Pilipovic of Middletown is co-founder of HELPLIGHTNJ. Her charitable group has been distributing energy saving light bulbs to New Jersey's low income and elderly residents since 2007.

Paula explains how she and her two friends came up with the idea. She says, "One day they were bouncing ideas off of each other to see how they could pitch-in and give a little bit back and we were thinking of the standard 'let's do a drive.... let's do a fundraiser and my friend who's dad works in the lighting industry kind of gave us this idea ... why don't we raise money to give out energy efficient light bulbs because they're kind of expensive and this way we can kind of get people to start using them?"

Paula says so far, they've given out 140-thousand light bulbs. She's responsible for organizing light bulb distributions in senior centers and housing authorities all over the state and the Mater Dei High School student works with ten other schools to help

She's one of 75 huggable heroes semi-finalist nationwide. She'll learn next week whether she'll move on to become one of 25 finalists.

Paula says ten winners selected could win \$7,500 in scholarship money and \$2,500 to give to the charity of their choice. She says they'll also get an expense-paid trip to a designation city to present their work.

Another Middletown resident has also made it to the semi finals. Erika Rech, is co-founder of Breast Friends Forever to assist women who face financial hardship as they battle breast cancer.

She created the organization when she realized most money raised for breast cancer went to research, not to help those currently struggling with cancer.