



## Zaylee Heydance Schlecht

June 30, 2008 - January 4, 2017

An outpouring of support from relief agencies, businesses, churches and individuals followed after the death of 8 year old Zaylee Schlecht in Otis last week. Almost 500 contributions were pledged by area residents and businesses to a GoFundMe account for the family, raising more than \$21,000 in the span of just a few days.

Schlecht died when a tree fell onto the home of her mother, Melissa Hoag, about 11:15 p.m. on Jan. 3.

"We believe she was asleep when it happened," said North Lincoln Fire & Rescue Capt. Jim Kusz at a press conference at the Otis Fire Hall the morning after the incident.

Schlecht's father, Ryan, is a volunteer with NLFR, and an obviously shaken Kusz said the grief was felt throughout the department. "Needless to say we care about our people, but this has been devastating," Kusz said. "Our department is made up of volunteers, and it's kind of like a family.

"We knew Zaylee at the fire department. She was a very nice little girl and would come to our parties."

Kusz went on to say that there were six people in the house at the time and

that the assumption was that strong winds brought the tree down. No one else was injured.

The GoFundMe account for the Schlecht family, which had an original goal of \$5,000, eclipsed \$21,000 as of Monday.

Schlect's uncle, Victor Mendoza, set up the account and said the family has been amazed at the community's response.

"The amount of help we've received has been immense," Mendoza said. "The family wants everyone to know how appreciative we are of all the support. "It goes to show how much everyone cares, and that's why we love to live here."

The family has also received support from local non-profit Angels Anonymous and the American Red Cross.

"We are joining together with many other caring individuals in this community and helping a neighbor because it is the right thing to do," said Angels Anonymous president Jim Davis in an email to the News Guard.

Recipients usually remain anonymous, "but we knew we needed to do something."

"We're working with them to provide resources to help address the immediate basic needs," said Monique Dugaw, Red Cross communications director for Oregon and Southwest Washington, who is based out of Portland. Those include temporary housing, food, clothing and the like, as well as information about recovery services and health and mental health services.

Schlecht was a third grade student at Taft Elementary, where a crisis response team was set up last week to help students deal with loss of their classmate. More than 20 students have participated in the support in the care room, said Susan Van Liew, the director of elementary and special education for the Lincoln County School district.

"Part of our district crisis protocol is to bring in a team to provide a safe place for kids to express their feelings," Van Liew said. "They seem to be doing very well under the circumstances. "The staff would like the family to know that we support them and send our condolences."

To donate to the family, go to [www.gofundme.com/rip-zaylee](http://www.gofundme.com/rip-zaylee).

Please share a dance for Zaylee

# Tribute Wall

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“ *Zaylee lit a candle in memory of Zaylee  
Heydance Schlecht* ”



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**Zaylee** - January 07, 2017 at 12:00 AM