

Creations for Charity

By Nannan Zhang



Creations for Charity is an annual fundraising event where LEGO® builders from all over the world sell their creations to buy LEGO sets for underprivileged children during the holidays. Organized in 2009, Creations for Charity has become the online LEGO community's annual tradition of giving back.

Who we are and what we do:

As the founder of Creations for Charity, it is my pleasure to see LEGO builders use our hobby in a unique and meaningful way to give to charity. Each year, Creations for Charity has shown how much the LEGO community cares about giving back and brightening the holidays of many kids. We have a unique way of doing this. We raise money by selling custom LEGO creations made by builders from all over the world. Since 2009, we raised over \$26,000 and donated over 1,500 brand new LEGO sets to organizations like Toys for Tots, Make-A-Wish, and children's hospitals across multiple cities in the US and in Croatia and Chile.

From October through November of each year, builders can sell their LEGO creations through our store on Bricklink. To donate a creation, a builder would fill out a form on our website, which gives us permission to upload the creation to our store. After the creation has been sold, we notify the builder to send it to the buyer. It's a simple process and easy for anyone to participate. When the fundraiser is over, the money is allocated to our distribution coordinators, who then buy as much LEGO as they can and donate them to the kids. On Christmas Day, I post pictures of all the LEGO we donated and everyone is happy knowing the positive impact they had on lots of kids that year.

Our history:

The idea for Creations for Charity began when a friend suggested in an online forum that its members donate LEGO sets to charity during the holidays of 2009. I liked the idea of the LEGO community giving back, and I wanted to think of a way for us to use our unique talents of building with LEGO to achieve this. That's when the idea of builders selling their MOCs in a fundraiser was born. Within a short time of several weeks, I organized and launched the first Creations for Charity event online. The idea gained popularity quickly and we sold 43 creations and raised over \$2,000 that year, which we used to buy LEGO sets for a local Toys for Tots organization in Michigan.

In the next 3 years, Creations for Charity expanded to include donations in multiple cities in the US as well as other countries such as Croatia and Chile. We raised over \$9,300 in 2012, making it our most successful year. Our distribution coordinators in each of those areas are enthusiastic about our cause and work hard to find the best deals on LEGO so we can buy as many sets as we can. In 2013, I hope we will raise even more money and donate LEGO to new places in the world.

Cool creations from the builders

People have donated some truly remarkable creations over the years. We have sold LEGO creations from all themes from chromed superhero minifigures to a motorized sci-fi helicopter from Avatar. There were many other cool things such as a life-sized LEGO katana, cartoon Star Wars™ characters, mosaics





of Harry Potter™ and Indiana Jones™, autographed LEGO® Architecture sets by the designer, and even a sculpture of the Toys for Tots teddy bear mascot. One of my favorites was an elegant moving sculpture of Pegasus. It was so popular that someone bought it as soon as the sale began!

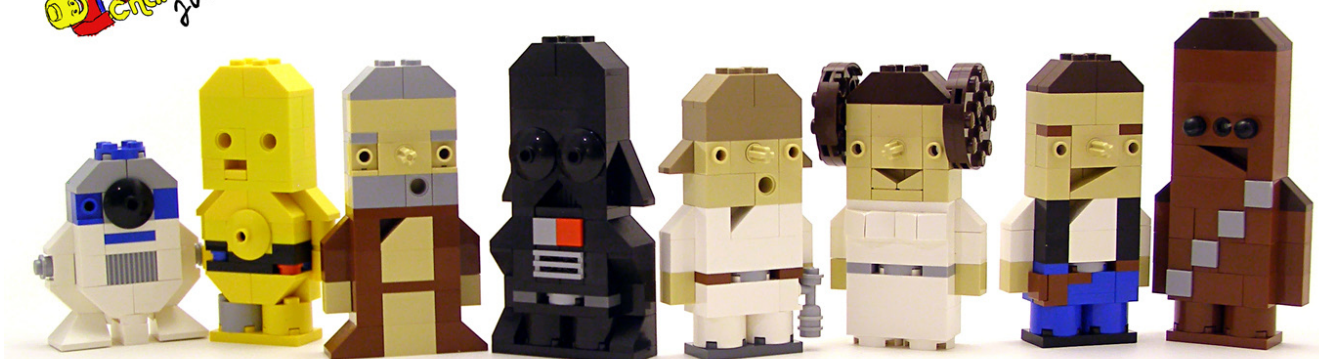
Of course, we welcome all creations from any builder to be added to our store. Besides the larger creations, there were many small gems such as a LEGO mousetrap, minifigure-scaled water coolers, a Pokeball, and brick-built Christmas ornaments. It's always exciting when we are notified of a new creation donation, and I can't wait to see what builders will donate this year!

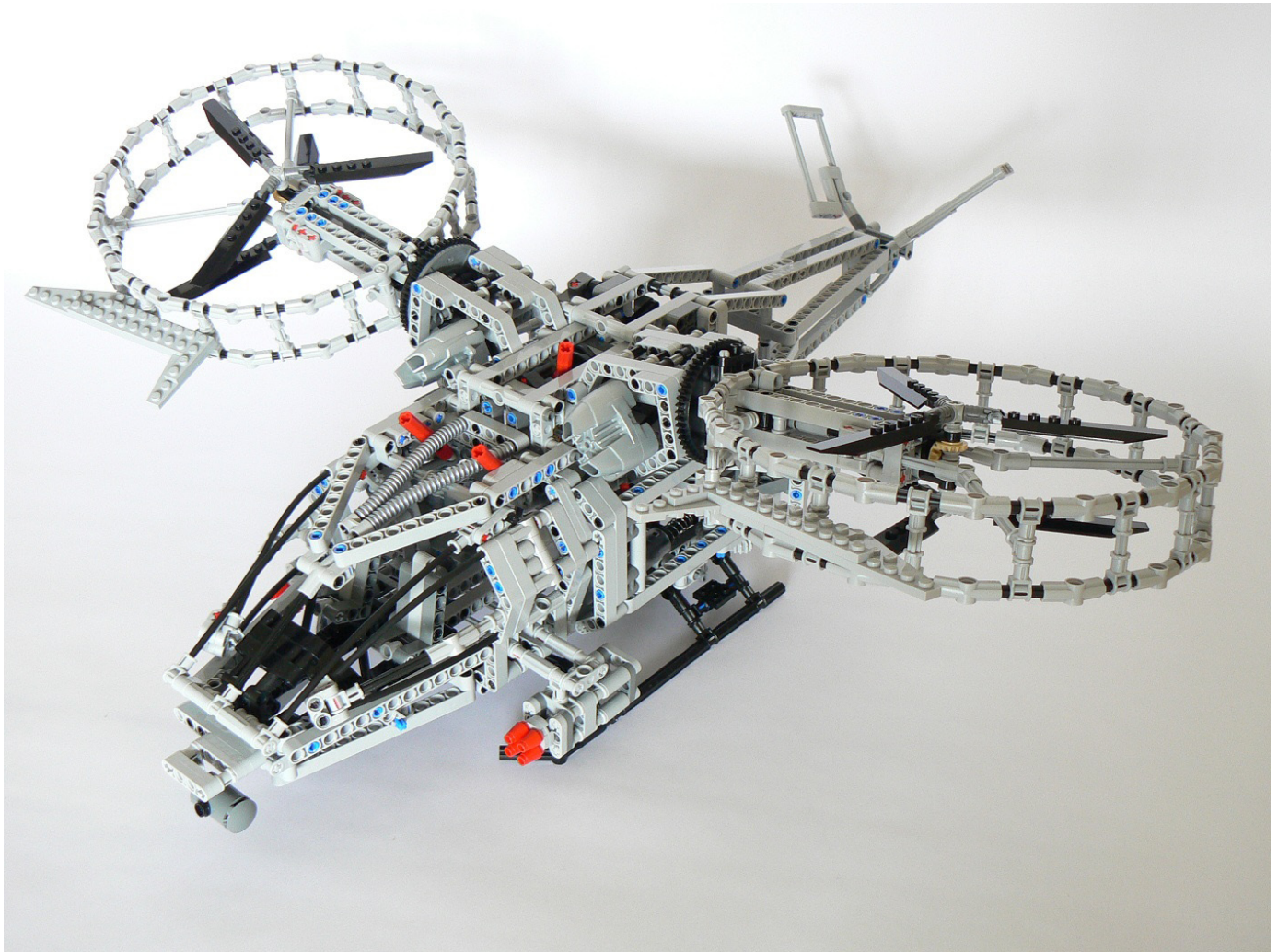
How to get involved

Anyone in the world can participate in Creations for Charity; you don't have to be a superstar builder or donate a big creation. The simple act of contributing a creation to our store shows that you support the cause. We accept any custom LEGO creations between October 1st and November 15th each year, so now is the perfect time to plan what you want to donate!



We know that LEGO is expensive and not everyone wants to part with their bricks, so we give everyone the option to be reimbursed for the cost of making their creation and shipping it to the buyer. This way, you are simply donating your time for making the creation, which is still a big help. And lastly, visit our store during from October 15th to November 30th to see what's on sale. Don't hesitate to make a purchase, because you won't get a second chance if another buyer beats you to it!





The future of Creations for Charity

It is my goal to expand our fundraiser each year and to attract new builders to take part. As we grow, I hope to donate LEGO to new locations in more countries. Although it is a challenge to donate LEGO® to countries outside the US due to higher costs, it is worth it to know that they are going to very good places such as an orphanage in Croatia or a Chilean school for children from poor families.

In addition, I am looking for more ways for the LEGO community to raise money. A lot of people aren't able to afford an expensive custom creation, so I am thinking about adding other options such as a raffle to give everyone the option of contributing smaller amounts of money. We also give unique thank-you gifts to those who have made large contributions, and each year we have exciting gifts to reward our helpers. In the end, what matters the most are the children. It's hard to find a kid who doesn't like LEGO, but some have never owned a LEGO set or much of other toys. When we give LEGO, we give a toy that sparks the imagination and provides endless possibilities of play. You may have fond memories of yourself growing up playing with LEGO, and if so, be thankful. We would like to see more children growing up with these memories.

To learn more about Creations for Charity and how you can participate, visit us at creationsforcharity.org. We accept creations for the 2013 fundraiser beginning in October. Our store opens on October 15th.

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