



A Home for Healing

More than just a place to stay, Katy's Ballard House provides patients, caregivers, and families in need with Texas-sized hospitality in a home away from home

Written by Susanna Donald | Select photography by Kristofor Rodriguez

It's no secret that Katy is surrounded by premier medical facilities. People travel from all over the country - and the world - in order to get treatment here. But what happens when an out-of-town patient needs long-term care? Where do they sleep when they don't qualify for a hospital bed? Being critically ill or having a loved one in the hospital is hard enough. Now imagine compounding the problem by sleeping in waiting rooms or spending money that should be going toward medical bills on a long-stay in a hotel.

Passion for a Mission

In 2011, Erin Ballard heard about this problem while she was undergoing treatment at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Katy. Her oncologist, Dr. Suni Patel, told her about Cinco Charities, a non-profit dedicated to providing temporary housing for patients and their caregivers coming to Katy area medical facilities for treatment of life-threatening illnesses. Since 2006, Cinco Charities had housed these families in nearby hotels, with the ultimate goal of building a free-of-

The Ballard House, a Cinco Charities community, serves to house families who have traveled to the area to receive long-term medical treatment



The house includes 24 guest suites, a chapel, library, game room, family room, and kitchen

Ginger Hopper, Ballard House's executive director, visits with guests Anna and Katarzyna from Poland



charge hospitality house that would be open to patients and their families.

Ballard, inspired by the mission of Cinco Charities, donated one of her rental houses in Katy for the non-profit to use, and her passion for the mission was contagious. Erin's husband, Monty, started the Ballard Foundation in order to help Cinco Charities move toward their goal of the freestanding hospitality house in Katy. Two years later, the Ballard House opened its doors to five families in need of a place to stay. "The generosity of Monty and Erin Ballard has made it possible for so many families to have free lodging," says Ginger Hopper, Ballard House's executive director. "The size we envisioned for our 'house' was half the size they helped us build."

Comforts of Home

With 24 guest suites, free onsite laundry facilities, a common kitchen and dining area, stocked pantry, library, chapel, beautiful backyard, and more, this 20,000 square-foot hospitality house truly offers guests the comforts of home. Patients can qualify to stay at Ballard House regardless of age or financial situation. To date, Ballard House has never charged guests anything because of the kindness of sponsors, donors, volunteers, and the Katy community.

Beyond the amenities, though, are the unique relationships that are formed between the families who are staying at



The Ballard House accommodates family members as well



Approved guests of Cinco Charities are allowed to stay at a preferred lodging facility free of charge



Becky Underwood, Pat Mahaffey, Chris Hiller, Erin Ballard, Monty Ballard, Ginger Hopper, and Lou Boxleitner all serve as board members for Ballard House

Ballard House. “Families find themselves meeting total strangers who become like family in a very short time,” says Hopper. “We see folks walking through the valley of the shadow of death, but there is so much hope, joy, and love. The Ballard House is a happy place.”

Making a Difference

Before guests come to stay at the Ballard House, they often find themselves drained financially and physically from traveling back and forth for treatment. Being able to stay somewhere free of charge allows patients to rest, recover, and use their funds for paying medical bills and taking care of things at home.

When Pamela Hockett found out she had breast cancer, she immediately began researching treatment options. “It was clear that MD Anderson, seven hours away, was the only medical facility that offered the treatment I needed,” she says. “The realization that I needed weekly treatment so far from home added an additional burden. Suddenly, I was faced with the possibility of not getting the treatment I needed due to the financial strain of needing housing and daily living expenses.” Hockett had already lost her job and was planning to be married at the beginning of June - incidentally, only a few days before she would start treatment.

Hockett’s social worker at MD Anderson told her about the Ballard House, and soon she and her husband-to-be Michael were offered the room where they would stay as husband and wife and where she could rest and recover from the life-saving treatment she would receive. “The Ballard House gave us so much more than a room,” Hockett says. “It was hope, and hope makes all the difference.” **KM**



SUSANNA DONALD is a local writer who loves telling the stories of charities like the Ballard House.

How You Can Help

Donate:

- Bottled water
- Cleaning supplies
- Copy paper
- Gift cards
- High efficiency laundry detergent
- New towels, bed linens, pillows
- Office supplies
- Pantry foods (non-perishable)
- Paper plates, napkins, bowls

- Paper towels
- Toilet paper
- Trash bags (45-gallon)

Monetary donations can be mailed to:

The Ballard House
21421 Cinco Park Rd.
Katy, TX 77450

Donate online via PayPal at Amazon SMILE select Ballard House as your charity when you shop.

Volunteering at the Ballard House:

Volunteers of all ages are welcome, but children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Visit the Ballard House for a volunteer application.



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