

# FROM THE HEART

Written by Tassie Hewitt

Area organizations that offer love, support, and an opportunity to give back to the Katy community prove that a helping hand can have the greatest impact on the life of a person in need



Angel Gowns by Diane | [angelgownsbydiane.org](http://angelgownsbydiane.org)

Angel Gowns is an organization which transforms donated wedding dresses into tiny burial gowns which have helped over 10,000 families grieve since 2014. Diane Dionne, founder of Angel Gowns by Diane, recognizes the sad truth that for the parents who lose their babies, there is a need for special clothing. "The reason I wanted to start this is my daughter lost two baby girls. Her first baby needed something to be buried in and we couldn't find anything. This was my inspiration," says Dionne. There is a need for volunteers who can sew, help with dress drives, and assist with tagging and organizing. "This is the one and only time these parents are going to get the chance to dress their baby. Moms tell us having this dress has helped them in the healing process," says Dionne.



Lunches of Love | [lunchesoflove.net](http://lunchesoflove.net)

Adriane Gray, creator of Lunches of Love, discovered that for the many students who rely on free or discounted meals, lunch might be their only meal of the day. When school is not in session over the weekends, during holidays, or over the summer, a surprising number of children go without eating. "It's mind-blowing to know that we have poverty like this in our own backyard," says Gray. Lunches of Love, which started as a church ministry in 2009, feeds over 4,000 children every day during extended holiday breaks. Children look forward to a decorated bag filled with a sandwich, snack, fresh fruit, and a drink. "We've had children tell us that the lunch on the weekend is what they're living off of," says Gray, who is always looking for volunteers to help with food drives or decorate bags. "If we can take one worry away from them about where their next meal is coming from, we're happy to do that."



Stuff the Sleigh | thesleigh.org

Stuff the Sleigh was founded in 2010 as a means of giving pediatric cancer patients toys during the holidays. Through the support of area volunteers, it now provides relief to hundreds of cancer and hematology patients. "Originally we were trying to give kids and their parents and siblings a sense of the holiday spirit. We started with toys and the name stuck," says executive director, Nicole Normandin. Now through its Dare to Dream and Dare to Educate programs, the organization gives homebound children the means to keep up with their schoolwork by providing tutors and computers. "Members on the board grew up in Katy and their sense of community is amazing. They really want to give back and make as much of an impact as possible," says Normandin.



Fraternity of One | fo1sports.org

Fraternity of One is a sports league that instills values. They offer football, cheerleading, baseball, volleyball, and more. "It teaches kids principles on the field, but more importantly, off the field," says Gayle Weber, mother of two sons involved in the league. The league, which promotes leadership, generosity, and responsibility, encourages players to gather on the field before each game for an FO1 moment, when a Bible verse is shared. It supports its players. When Weber's son was in a tragic accident, the league set up the Trent Weber Scholarship in his honor to provide financial assistance to players who can't afford to play sports. "When he passed away, instead of flowers we asked people to donate to Fraternity of One," says Weber. "It's more than a sports league. It's sports with a purpose." **KM**



Katy Christian Ministries | ktcmm.org

A group of area churches came together in 1984 to form Katy Christian Ministries when they realized there was a need to provide assistance for families in one centralized location. The organization, which helped over 36,000 families last year, offers a food pantry, resale shop, professional counseling, and a crisis center for victims of domestic and sexual abuse. "Our focus is to transform lives," says executive director, Deysi Crespo. The success of the organization is dependent on volunteers who help answer phones, work in the community garden, assist in the resale store and food pantry, and man the 24-hour crisis hotline. "It's really rewarding to walk the journey with these families."

## LEND A HELPING HAND

- Angel Gowns by Diane**  
Donate your wedding dress, bridesmaid dress, and other formal wear. They are always seeking donations.
- Katy Christian Ministries**  
Get involved by donating your gently used clothes, home decor, or furniture. They are always looking for volunteers in-store and at numerous events and food drives they have.
- Stuff the Sleigh**  
This organization offers quite a few ways to get involved. From their event and fundraising planners, to people on the hospital committee. There is something for everyone.
- Lunches of Love**  
The organization needs volunteers of all ages to decorate lunch sacks, bag dry goods, make sandwiches, and assemble lunches. They have a wish list where you can bring food items or make monetary donations.
- F01 Sports**  
This sports league needs volunteers interested in jobs ranging from social media, cheerleading coaches, and field monitors on game day. They also accept donations for young athletes who can't afford to play sports.