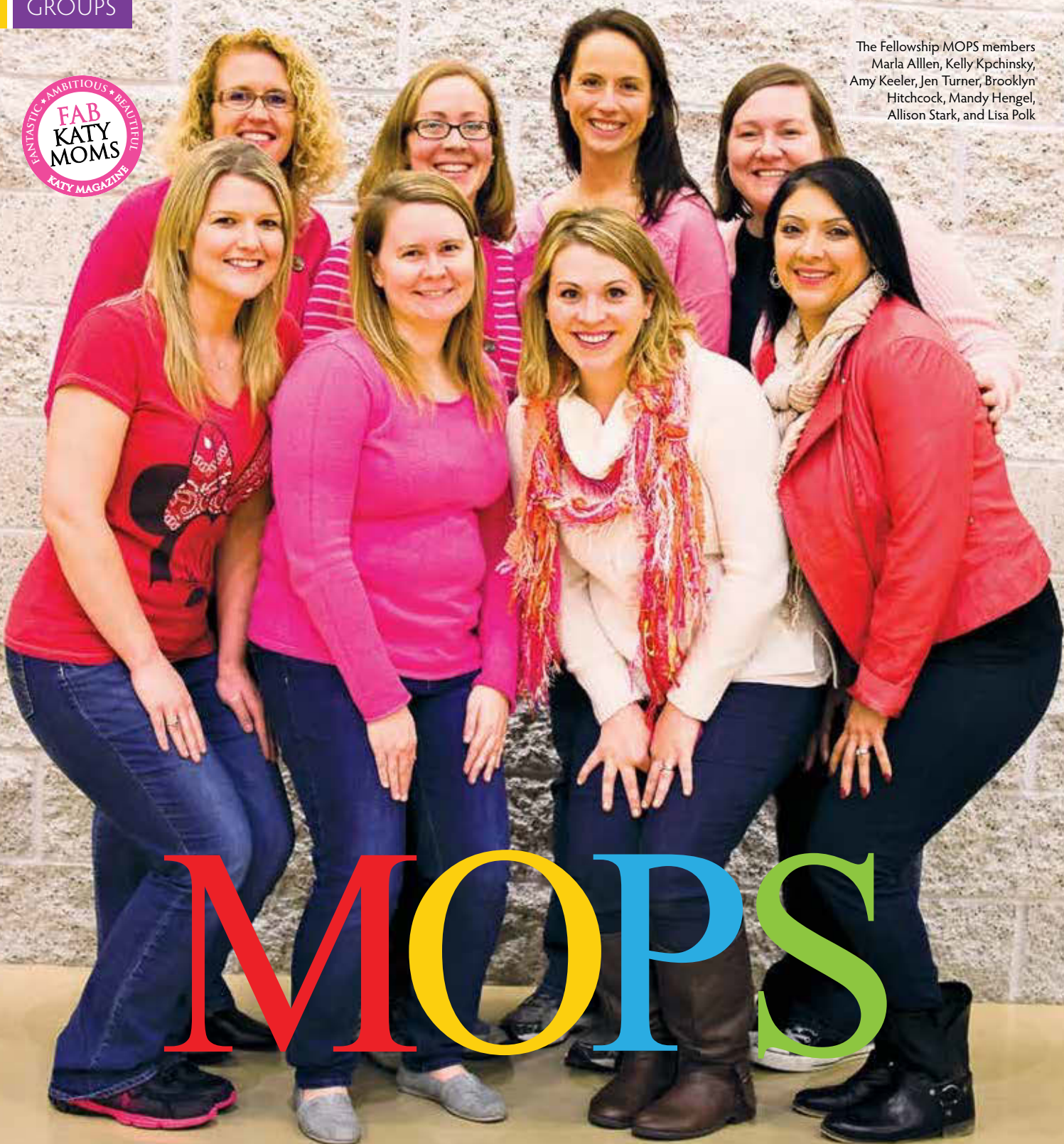




The Fellowship MOPS members  
Marla Allen, Kelly Kpchinsky,  
Amy Keeler, Jen Turner, Brooklyn  
Hitchcock, Mandy Hengel,  
Allison Stark, and Lisa Polk

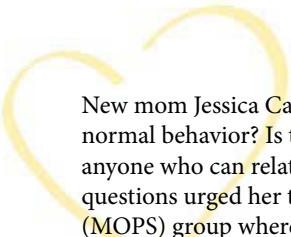


# MOPS

## Katy Mom Support

A look at some of Katy's Mothers of Preschoolers groups and how they are encouraging and equipping young moms

*Written by Elizabeth Padgett | Photography by Kristen Richards*



New mom Jessica Carollo found herself wondering, “Is this normal behavior? Is that temperature too high? Is there anyone who can relate to a strong-willed child?” These questions urged her to seek out a Moms of Preschoolers (MOPS) group where she could inquire with the comfort of knowing others were facing the same challenges. She found her home in the MOPS group at The Fellowship Church in Katy.

### Something Was Missing

Allison Stark founded the group in September 2014. Stark shares, “Before returning to Katy, where my husband and I grew up, we traveled around the U.S. with the Army. MOPS was a way to connect with other moms who lived near me,

### Coming Together

“My favorite memory is a bittersweet one,” Keel shares. “I was co-coordinator at the time for the FBC Katy MOPS group, and one of our moms who had been battling cancer passed away. During her battle, we secretly collected money and gift cards for her family to assist with the incurring costs of medical and travel expenses. After her passing, we held another collection for her husband and their children to assist them with food and upcoming Christmas gifts. Seeing the appreciation and surprise on her husband’s face was such a blessing.”

The MOPS at The Fellowship are similarly rallying around their own member Ashley Gallivan who is currently battling



MOPS provides a wonderful support and much-needed fellowship for mothers of preschoolers

and my group in El Paso was my largest system of support during my husband’s deployment in 2013. When we decided to become civilians and move back to Katy, I knew The Fellowship would be a great place for me to start another MOPS group.”

Harmony Keel also felt she needed the community of a MOPS group when she returned home to Katy after living in Colorado for 10 years. The First Baptist Church of Katy’s group was born in fall 2008, and has been a leading group in the area ever since. Keel describes MOPS as a blessing as deep relationships are developed among fellow mothers.

breast cancer. During their February meeting, the women gathered around Gallivan, each saying a prayer, uniting their spirits as one, and celebrating the end of her chemotherapy treatments.

“The women of this MOPS group are much more than friends; they are an extension of my family,” Gallivan says. The extensive child care that the group helped provide for her three children and the homemade meals they prepared for her family while she went through treatments were invaluable gifts to Gallivan.

Mother of four daughters, Amy Keeler, expressed an equal appreciation of the support MOPS groups can provide. “Our leadership has really tried to make it an atmosphere

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where we can all be vulnerable and honest with each other about our struggles and frustrations without judgment,” says Keeler.

### Enriching Lives

Though providing a community of support is a major benefit of MOPS, there are also educational opportunities provided through the appearance of special guests and speakers at MOPS meetings.

Laurie Mattingly says she is passionate about working with local MOPS groups and understands the unique challenges mothers face. A former preschool educator and ministry worker, Mattingly spoke to a MOPS group and urged them to think of their future selves when organizing their homes.

Carollo shares that another memorable guest speaker the group was Connie Stowers. “She taught us how to sew a hem and sew on a button. I should have learned that years ago,” says Carollo. “She was so fun, delightful, and helpful. It was something that to me is priceless.”

While many MOPS groups understandably focus on mothers, Katy’s groups provide care and enrichment for the children as well. Jen Palmer of FBC Katy’s MOPS says, “My daughter loves it and comes home talking about what they learned in MOPS. She loves the teachers; they are fun and caring.”

### Finding What's Right for You

MOPS is an international organization with groups that meet all over the world. Palmer encourages newcomers that, “If one MOPS group doesn’t seem to work for you, try another one. Years ago with my first child, my church’s MOPS just didn’t ‘click’ with me. I gave MOPS a second try at a different church and found the right group. I have made good friends that I can be myself with who love and support me while I navigate the waters of being a mom.” **KM**

*ELIZABETH PADGETT is a professional writer and is considering borrowing her two nephews in order to attend a MOPS group and make new friends.*

## What it takes to join MOPS and what to keep in mind

- Should have at least one child age newborn to preschool age to join
- You don't need to be a church member to join a MOPS group that may be hosted at a church facility
- Check the schedule and meeting times of the group
- Check the frequency of meetings. Some have a meeting every week and others twice a month
- Some groups have waiting lists according to school semesters
- If you try one group and don't feel it's a good match, don't be afraid to check out another group

*Find a Katy MOPS Group*  
*Visit [mops.org](http://mops.org)*



Christina Snow, Angie Aviki, and Judy Kelley