

NOV/DEC 2011

absolutely!

# KATY

COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

12  
Days of  
Christmas

## Katy Family Gives Back

Ashmore Family Brings Holiday Magic To Families Facing Difficult Times

Inside

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# Stuff the Sleigh of Katy



Local Family Strives to Bring Holiday Cheer to Children with Cancer and Their Families

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**KATY**  
COVER STORY



Some of the volunteers involved in Stuff the Sleigh are Janet Burkett, Lori Bode, Andy Wohlgemuth, Susie Price, Sean Fecht, Jamee Rivera, Garrett, Kelli, Erika and Kiersten Ashmore, Katie Sparkman, Tom Gibbs (Santa), Heather James, Wanda Cramer, Natalie Gables, Madison Chalker, Lauren Fecht, Jodi Carroll and Michelle Hardt.

ing that we can keep building on this, and make it a holiday tradition for the Katy community. I am also grateful for my family, and especially my wife, Kelli, who has devoted so much time and energy to making Stuff the Sleigh such a success."

### How to Help

The community can help again this year by dropping off toys or monetary donations to the Firethorne Community Center located at 28128 N. Firethorne Road in Katy. After the sleigh is full, the families will go to Firethorne for a private event that will include Santa and his elves, a lunch donated by Chick-fil-A and Chuy's, and receive grocery gift cards from H-E-B for a holiday meal. Donations can also be sent to Voice Runner, C/O Stuff the Sleigh, 2501 S. Mason Road, Katy, TX 77450.

Sponsorship has grown to include Cinco Charities, Chick-fil-A, Target, Chuy's, Country Park Portraits, Firethorne, Academy, Keller Williams Realty, Texas Children's Hospital, Holy Covenant Child Development Center, Odessa Kilpatrick Elementary, Memorial Parkway Junior High cheerleaders, Voice Runner and the Ashmore and Geddes families.

For more information about Stuff the Sleigh, please email [stuffthesleigh@gmail.com](mailto:stuffthesleigh@gmail.com).



Santa visits with Erika Ashmore.



Lucy Schuler visits with Santa during the 2010 Stuff the Sleigh holiday event.

can't give these things to their kids when faced with huge medical expenses." The Geddes family, although still focused on fighting their son's cancer which has spread to his spine, made a generous contribution to Stuff the Sleigh to help other families who are in the same fight.

### Filling a Sleigh

Once the Ashmore's determined the focus of their charity event, Stuff the Sleigh of Katy was born. In December of 2010, the inaugural event took place at the Firethorne neighborhood community center. A sleigh was filled with donated toys and 50 children, along with siblings and parents, were treated to a spectacular holiday celebration. Their hope is that this year's event will be even bigger and that more families can be included.

With the opening of Texas Children's Hospital West Campus, they have located children and families in need. Every bit of the proceeds collected will be used for the toys and the event, and any remaining proceeds will be placed in a fund for families who need help paying for treatment.

### Grateful Families

For families facing a devastating illness, Stuff the Sleigh has been a blessing. Many of the families explained to the Ashmores that without it, they would have had nothing, and no means to celebrate the holiday season. "To me, that's what the holidays are about," said Garrett. "I can't tell you how much it means to me to know that my family has helped other families at this time of year and given the kids something to smile about. I am hop-

ing kids suffering from cancer and their siblings a holiday filled with presents, a visit with Santa and a nice holiday meal was the idea behind Stuff the Sleigh, a Katy community toy drive for local families. This is the second year for the event that was started by Garrett and Kelli Ashmore. "The event was a huge success last year," said Garrett. "It was life-changing for everyone involved, and I hope and pray that this year the Katy community will embrace it again so that we can give families with sick children a nice holiday to remember."

### Giving Back

Garrett and Kelli both grew up in Katy and have known each other since elementary school. Garrett graduated from Katy High School in 1994, went on to graduate from Georgetown University in Washington D.C., and came back to Houston to eventually be hired by Enron. He spent three years with the company and like scores of others, ended up losing everything he had. "It was a huge learning experience for me," he said. "I learned both personally and professionally from it, and I have moved on from the experience."

Kelli is a graduate of Stephen F. Austin University where charitable giving, especially raising funds for Susan G. Komen University where charitable giving, sense of appreciation for being part of such a giving community and wanted to think of a meaningful way to give back. They thought about their own family and friends. Another couple, Dan and Missy Geddes, who also grew up in Katy and are childhood friends of the Ashmores, have a son who was diagnosed as a toddler with brain cancer. Their family opened the Ashmore's eyes to the reality of families who are battling childhood cancer, and the fact that many times, holidays are filled with visits to the hospital, lab or doctor's office, leaving little time or money for shopping for gifts, having a holiday meal or just having a nice family day.

"Dan and Missy told me how nice it is for kids to have a toy or game to play with while they are waiting for treatment, and what a nice, welcome distraction it can provide," said Garrett. "What people don't realize is that even middle-class families