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Fort Worth Nonprofit Organization Seeks Corporate Partnerships after Receiving More than 2,000 Wedding Dresses to be used for Angel Gowns

Program provides comfort, beautiful gowns for infants' final photos and burial services

Fort Worth, Texas, April 1, 2014 – More than 30,000 infants will be able to receive Angel Gowns thanks to the generosity of those who donated more than 2,000 wedding gowns this week to NICU Helping Hands. NICU Helping Hands' volunteer seamstresses turn donated wedding gowns into beautiful infant burial gowns. Now, the organization is seeking corporate support to cover the costs associated with this program.

With increased awareness and funding, NICU Helping Hands could provide an Angel Gown for every infant loss in the United States. Shipping costs for 24,000 Angel Gowns are \$60,000 per year. Ten thousand donated wedding dresses can provide enough Angel Gowns to clothe infants in the United States for the next five years.

As the Angel Gowns story has grown, NICU Helping Hands has experienced an increase in online traffic from many wishing to share their story of infant loss or volunteer their time to honor a loved one. This week has seen over 35,000 unique visitors to the organization's website and 16,000 more Facebook likes. In the past week, NICU Helping Hands has reached over 26 million people via website and social media. As a result, NICU Helping Hands expects an increase in hospital and family requests for Angel Gowns.

Since 2013, NICU Helping Hands has never had to turn down a family asking for help during a child's stay in a hospital neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) or following an infant's death. NICU Helping Hands will overnight a burial gown to any family in the United States and Canada in need. The organization has relationships with several hospitals in the Dallas/Fort Worth area that stock Angel Gowns for their NICU families, and seeks to form relationships with hospitals all over the United States and Canada to carry the Angel Gowns. NICU Helping Hands relies on generous donors to cover the cost of tissue paper, boxes and shipping charges, and volunteers to sew the gowns. Twelve to 20 Angel Gowns can be made from each wedding dress.

"There's something hopeful about that start of life, about a wedding, and to me, it's that full circle," explained NICU Helping Hands' Founder and President Lisa Grubbs. "This child who is so loved by their parents, being wrapped in love by a bride."

NICU Helping Hands has seen an outpouring of love this week and an unexpected influx of wedding dresses to be turned into Angel Gowns. A corporate sponsorship for photography, shipping and supplies will mean that NICU Helping Hands can continue to honor infants' lives during their parents' most troubling times. NICU Helping Hands believes that providing an Angel Gown for a family experiencing infant loss shows respect for the child and gives comfort to the families, a best practice that the organization will present this fall to medical professionals at a continuing education conference.

"There's such a need and people want to talk about this," said Grubbs. "What they really need is love, comfort and validation that their child was important and existed because their loss has left a void in their life that is indescribable."

NICU Helping Hands supports families while they have children in the NICU, many of whom are born premature. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 11 percent of babies, or one in every eight, are born preterm each year, a group at higher risk for infant mortality. Over 24,000 infant deaths occurred in 2013. Preterm birth is defined as prior to 37 weeks of pregnancy.

NICU Helping Hands continues to accept donated wedding gowns. For a shipping address and drop-off locations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, visit <http://www.nicuhelpinghands.org/angel-gowns/>.

About NICU Helping Hands

It is NICU Helping Hands' mission to provide comprehensive support programs and resources to parents of premature infants not only during their stay in the NICU but during and after their transition home. NICU Helping Hands was created in 2010 because of the overwhelming need in Fort Worth, Texas, for a local organization that could support parents both educationally and emotionally. Since opening, NICU Helping Hands has served its local community as well as families all across the country with education, support and a helping hand during one of the most difficult journeys they will ever make.

Source: NICU Helping Hands, (817) 584-1437, www.nicuhelpinghands.org

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