



Pastor John Heckmann drove four hours to perform an emergency baptism for Daniel. From left: Staci and Brian Geiger with grandmothers Dorothy Geiger (paternal), and Paula Bangsund (maternal).

We Love Because He First Loved Us

BY BECKY WEHRSPANN, FEATURES EDITOR

The kindnesses of friends and strangers led Staci Geiger to pursue an outlet to reach other parents and families of medically complex children. She began brainstorming care package ideas, and Daniel's Lion Heart Foundation was born. "Whenever I started seeing God clearly, tangibly moving in my life, my first thought was 'I have to tell people about this; I have to share this.' Families of children with medical needs realize first-hand how helpless we are and how much we need God."

Staci received spiritual support and encouragement while waiting for her son's birth and during his hospital stay, but she recognized not everyone was as fortunate. "I'm a Christian teacher in a Christian school," Staci says. "Our pastor, Pastor John Heckmann, visited us weekly in Houston all 14 weeks we were there. It was unbelievable the spiritual support that I had, and I realized that most families that are in those circumstances don't have that. It has become my mission to provide that kind of spiritual support through these care packages to those families who are hungry for it."

The care packages are designed to give emotional, physical, and financial support to families — either while in the hospital with a child, or after returning home. "And most importantly we offer spiritual comfort to these families in the trenches with their children," Staci says.

The foundation of the care packages is a bundle of prayer cards. "When people would pray with me, it was the perfect thing they could give me," Staci remembers. "I started offering that to others in the PICU, and they were hungry for it, but I can't always be there to pray with people. That's why the prayer cards go in our care packages. On one side is 'read when you feel lost' or 'read when you feel worried.' The other side has a Bible verse and prayer specifically for that emotion. It provides the prayer you can read and becomes a devotional activity as you pray the Scripture. For families that might not know how to pray or what to pray or when to pray, it's the beginning of that spiritual support."

Other care package items are inspired by things Staci remembers getting while in the hospital. "One thing I received was a beautiful coffee mug with a verse on it," Staci recalls. "When you are in the hospital, things are not always pretty; these are beautiful and provide Bible verses to remind you of God. I also add individual coffee creamers because it's nice to have a good cup of coffee. (We give) bath bombs for the moms who are at home. We also have fluffy socks because the hospital is cold. It's a comfortable thing — to feel loved when

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 13:44



you put these socks on. It's about reminding yourself that you are a human being and this isn't your life forever. When possible, we give a gift card for food or parking that is easily accessible for families. It's financially devastating going through this journey."

During the LWML Texas District Fall Retreat last year, Arch Books were collected, and many of the women helped assemble the prayer cards and wrote a personal note to be included in the care packages. "The books are wonderful," Staci says, "because not every child who is in the hospital is an infant. Having real notes from real people — any gesture that shows 'I'm not alone; people really care,' goes a long way."

Staci reminds others wishing to reach out that it doesn't take much to make an impact. "Sometimes we make helping into this big deal, but it doesn't have to be. Maybe taking food to someone, or a hand-written note, or a little token that says people care — those are the things I most cherished and what I now, in turn, try to provide to others. I just want to reach out with that love and mercy that Jesus gives us."

We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

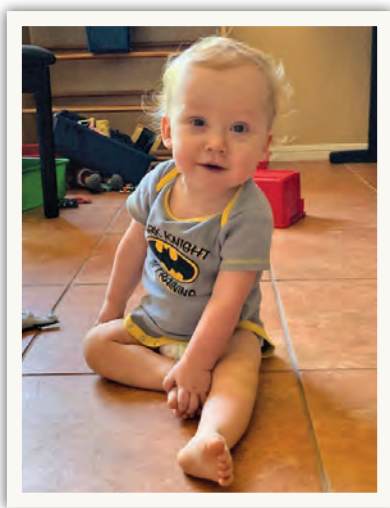
In 2019, 100 care packages were sent to Children's Memorial Herman Hospital in Houston, where Daniel received his care, and to families around the United States who applied to receive a package. Staci is working with other families around the nation to set up drives to collect money and items to fill more care

packages and reach more families. "People want to give, and they want to do something, but they don't always know how. One way I would like Daniel's Lion Heart to grow is by offering assistance to heart moms. We're a 501c3 registered non-profit, raising money through the foundation, so we purchase the items and ship it to them, and they deliver (the packages) to their own hospital. It's enabling heart moms all around the nation to share the hope of God."

Staci has a goal of four drives each year, collecting enough each time to fill 50 care packages. "I'm hoping to have at least 200 care packages coming from my own personal fundraising efforts per year, in addition to the ones heart moms are raising and delivering to their hospitals," Staci says. "As our organization gains steam and we make connections, I'm excited to see how it unfolds with others being able to do this."

Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them (Psalm 139:16).

"I believe these baby's lives are precious. I believe in the sanctity of life. Everyone always wants a healthy baby. A lot of babies are not born healthy, but their lives still have a lot of meaning. Babies have the best chance of getting better when they have parents who are connected and able to advocate. So, if I can care for the parents — which means I'm caring for the children — that's what I want to do." Q



Daniel will celebrate his 2nd birthday in July. He regularly visits his large team of specialists at the children's hospital in Houston, where he continues to receive excellent care.

You can find more information about Daniel's Lion Heart Foundation at www.danielslionheart.com where you can donate directly from the page and read Staci's blog. The Foundation also has a Facebook page ([Facebook.com/danielslionheartfoundation](https://www.facebook.com/danielslionheartfoundation)) and an email address (danielslionheartfoundation@gmail.com).