

THE LEADER-NEWS

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Providing a ray of light on the darkest of days

ND nonprofit Angel Gowns helps families in mourning

BY RYAN SCHLEHUBER
EMMONS COUNTY
RECORD WRITER

Kelsey Glynn knows firsthand the devastation and darkness that can overcome a family mourning the loss of a child.

“Every situation can look so different,” Glynn said, a Beulah resident who has personally suffered the loss a child. “Whether it is a spontaneous loss or the loss of a full-term baby who had complications, regardless of how, it is a very dark and very sad feeling.”

Two months ago, Glynn decided to reignite a flame that began in the Beulah-Hazen communities over a decade ago, looking to help others around the state who would go through what she did. It also gave her the opportunity to get back into a hobby of hers – sewing.

Roughly 11 years ago, a nonprofit organization called North Dakota Angel Gowns was formed, in which volunteers joined together in gathering old wedding dresses and repurposing them into infant burial gowns, which can, at the least, provide a small ray of light onto a rather dark and grim situation for families in mourning. The group had a good following of volunteers across the state, however, when the pandemic hit in 2020, the group almost dissolved completely.

A stay-at-home mom of four children ages seven and younger, Glynn found out about ND Angel Gowns and got involved. She began helping the remaining founders of the group and then eventually became the torch bearer, coordinating the collections of donated dresses, material and money from across the state, keeping the small number of regular volunteers she had at hand in contact and reaching out to facilities that could help hand out these decorative little gowns.

Since then, Glynn has been revitalizing the group in new ways. One new idea she came up with is holding a Volunteer Day, to gather volunteers to help with putting together the gowns, which took place Nov. 22.

“I don’t know how many we aim to make, but my hope is that we can have a lot of them completed and be put on the shelf ready to be sent to families that need one,” Glynn said leading up to the event.

She said volunteers are needed owing to a list of requests that can pile up quickly,



SUBMITTED PHOTOS | KELSEY GLYNN

The Glynn family includes Kelsey Glynn, her husband, Jared, and their four children. Kelsey has reignited a nonprofit organization called ND Angel Gowns, which began 11 years ago in the Beulah-Hazen area. The group collects donated wedding dresses and material and repurposes them into infant burial gowns to help families across the state who are in mourning.

and the last thing she wants is to have to turn down a family in need. The church, she said, is graciously allowing her to temporarily store all the donated dresses and material at the church and will allow her to keep completed gowns there until they are ready to be shipped out.

Once enough gowns are made, Glynn and her volunteers will reach out to funeral homes and hospitals across the state offering gowns to families who recently lost a child.

“Being able to give something so beautiful to put their baby in, it sheds some light and hope on a rather dark situation,” Glynn said. “I’ve read from parents who received gowns that it meant a lot to them, receiving donated gowns and materials rather than going out and buying fabric. To them, it is more meaningful when it comes from donations.”

With the help of volunteers – which no seamstress experience is needed – Glynn is hoping to have enough gowns created to begin making calls. She said she has received many donations in forms of wedding gowns, materials and cash, but it is the work of putting the gowns together that is the biggest challenge.

“We even had sewing machines donated to us, so if someone wants to volunteer but doesn’t have a sewing machine or doesn’t want to bring theirs, we have ones on hand they can use,” Glynn said.

Though she said the organization currently has plenty of wedding gowns and material, more is always appreciated. But the best thing right now, Glynn said, are cash donations, which allow ND Angel Gowns to afford to ship each



gown to its destination anywhere across the state.

“What we are able to do is based on donations,” she said.

ND Angel Gowns doesn’t just make gowns. It also makes wraps and pouches for smaller babies, hats and bonnets, socks, diapers and blankets. Jewelry can also be made, such as bracelets and necklaces. Glynn said if there are volunteers who are handy at crocheting little outfits, hats, booties and or blankets, she would gladly work with and help them if they volunteer their time and effort.

After initially sending out some advertising on ND Angel Gowns, Glynn received a lot of feedback, with 20 people reaching out willing to help.

“It feels good to help someone out,” she said. “And the generosity that I’ve seen so far in just this short time I’ve been doing this, it’s such a really cool experience.”

To donate, ND Angel Gowns has a PayPal account and a QR code set up. More information can be found on its social media page, at ND Angel Gowns.

Materials most in need for donation include white thread, buttons, 1/4-inch ribbon and 2-gallon Ziploc baggies.