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Local business reaches out to cancer patients

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Cleaning for a Reason, a Lewisville nonprofit, is reaching out to other businesses to help make cancer patients' lives easier.

The nonprofit offers free professional housecleaning and maid services to improve the lives of women undergoing treatment for any type of cancer. Cleaning for a Reason partners with professional residential maid services to provide the free services to cancer patients. The companies take two patients at a time and offer four free general cleanings — one a month for four months. During October, the nonprofit celebrates — Pinktober. —

— Pinktober is our way of reaching out to find even more cleaning service companies that will help cancer patients, — said Debbie Sardone, founder of Cleaning for a Reason. — We hope some of the attention will affect other companies, and they will join the organization. The biggest need for the nonprofit is additional companies the second biggest need is funds. —

Sardone, who also owns Buckets and Bows, a Lewisville-based cleaning service, began giving away free cleaning services to cancer patients in 2005 and the organization became a nonprofit in 2006.

— About 15 years ago, my company took a phone call from lady asking for cleaning prices. She needed help but couldn't afford it because she was dealing with cancer, — Sardone said. — It didn't occur to me at the time that I could have offered it to her for free. It wasn't that I didn't care, I just didn't think fast enough. Right after that, I told my staff that if we ever have a woman call with cancer to give me the phone and we'll offer it for free or at cost. —

Sardone said it became an internal business policy.

— There was a turning point for me, I realized we could take it beyond the area, and reach out to even more women, — Sardone said.

Sardone's turning point came when she was speaking at a conference. She used the time to discuss with other cleaning service companies about what could be done to help women fighting cancer.

— Many other companies said they wanted to help women too, — Sardone said. — I decided there was a huge need, and I started nonprofit because I knew there was a need. We needed to come together as one collective group to help these women. —

Today, the nonprofit recruits cleaning services all over the country to join in its effort. Cleaning for a Reason's staff is on the phone all day with maid services, according to Sardone. So far, the nonprofit has recruited 750 maid services that provide free services for women and helped over 4,000 women nationwide including four provinces in Canada.

"I can't stress enough, that our biggest need is finding more maid services that will offer their services for free," Sardone said. "The reactions we get are amazing. We get some of the sweetest calls and emails from women, saying they can barely take care of their children, but having a clean home made them feel better."

Dr. Candice Farmer, board member with Cleaning for a Reason, said when a cancer patient feels that they have some control over their lives, such as having a clean home, it can help the patient feel better about their lives and focus on treatment.

During October, Cleaning for a Reason will give away \$1 million worth of free house cleaning, according to Sardone.

Those interested in receiving free cleaning services should visit the nonprofit's website www.cleaningforaReason.org. Perspective clients choose the "cancer patient" tab and fill out an application. Sardone said the nonprofit only screens for valid illness. Patients need to fax a note from their doctor to the nonprofit. The foundation then calls local maid services in the patient's area. Patients receive four free cleanings once a month.

"We had to limit the application process after we were featured on the Oprah show," Sardone said. "We were slammed with thousands of requests for help, which is why we're using "Pinktober" to reach out to more cleaning services. I never could have dreamed that we could help so many people. We're so pleased to see this grow and see the public embrace it. I'd say we probably sign up 35 maid services a month."

Currently, there are 20 businesses in Texas signed up with Cleaning for a Reason, but Sardone said there are approximately 1,800 cleaning services in the state.

"We haven't even begun to stretch our services," Sardone said. "I believe most companies haven't signed up with us because they haven't heard of us. I encourage people to tell their cleaning service company about us so we can help even more people."

For information visit www.cleaningforaReason.org.

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