

Cinco Charities seeks hospitality house for medical patients

By Wayne Chandler

Katy manufacturer Monty Ballard and his wife, Erin, a recent cancer patient, have pledged \$1.5 million to Cinco Charities, dedicated to finding a site and building a Ronald McDonald type hospital hospitality house in the Katy area.

Cinco Charities is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization since 2008 which has assisted more than 100 patients and families.

Realtor Ginger Hopper, announced the gift at the September Katy Area Economic Development Council breakfast along with the news of a unique golf tournament will be held for Cinco Charities November 21 courtesy of the Ballards.

Hopper, Cinco Charities board chair, and Dr. Greg Chronowski, an M.D. Anderson surgeon who lives in the Katy area, told the KAEDC members of the progress being made to raise funds, and provide a "home away from home" for Katy patients and their families.

"Our mission is to provide temporary housing in our community," Ginger said, "for individuals and their families who are hospitalized or receiving treatment for a serious medical condition."

Ginger said that in 2006 a Keller Williams International executive challenged his agents to "leave a legacy" in their community. Ginger said that, in their brainstorming sessions, they soon recognized that Katy was developing a huge medical center, and that there was an urgent need to accommodate patients in ways other than direct medical care.

"We knew of the phrase, 'build it and they will come'," Hopper said, "and then we realized they're already here."

"Our goal is to provide a free standing home that can house 12 to 15 patients and their families," Ginger said. A two to three acre site in the Katy area,

near the hospitals, is being sought.

Cinco Charities began a pilot program in 2008 and determined the beginning applicants never would be asked to pay. We house guests in local hotels and extended stay suites. "Doctors have told us, had it not been for Cinco Charities providing fee housing, a number of them would not have been able to receive treatment.

Monty and Erin Ballard, last month, in addition to the generous pledges, provided a loaner home and purchased new furnishings. The home is located near hospitals and convenient to the patients. The Ballards were introduced to Cinco Charities by Katy oncologist Dr. Sunil Patel who has been treating Erin, who has been fighting her own personal battle with cancer. "The Ballards exemplify the beautiful giving spirit found in the people in Katy," Hopper said.

Monty Ballard's own-profile firm, Fluoro-seal, has manufactured materials for plastic containers for the past 28 years, and his products are sold all over the world. "We're fortunate," Ballard said, "to have this opportunity to help change the way people in Katy live."

Cinco Charities joined the National Association of Hospital Hospitality Houses in 2008, and has gained valuable knowledge on how other similar groups have met needs of patients.

"We have several fundraisers a year to bring in the needed monies to continue fulfilling our mission," Ginger said, "and we have received donations from individuals, as well as a couple of grants."

The next big fundraiser will be the Don Hennigan Memorial Marathon Golf Tourney November 21 at Willow Fork Country Club. A feature will be the participation of area residents of Wounded Warriors, injured military veterans.

To help, call Cinco Charities at 281-220-2188, or go to Board@cincocharities.org.

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