

## Las Cruces group helps expectant mothers through free baby showers

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LAS CRUCES — When teenagers come to mind, it generally brings about an image of cell phones and drivers permits — not charitable baby showers for mothers-to-be in need and their families.

Las Cruces Judah Cleveland, 17, has taken high interest in the latter, forming volunteer-based organization Showers of Grace to provide baby showers for low-income families in the community.

"We hold baby showers where we give essential baby items to families in need. Anyone who calls for a baby shower, we give them one," she said.

Judah's younger sister, Annika, 15, helped her sister come up with the idea, and it takes a collaborative effort among the Cleveland family and volunteers from the St. Patrick's Anglican Church to put them together.

"I came up with the idea just over a year ago and we threw our first shower last September," Judah said. "With job loss and low income, we wanted to be able to help them out a little."

Funded completely through monetary and item donations, Showers of Grace include games, baby clothes, diapers, maternity clothes, a homemade cake and other snacks as well as one big item - like a car seat, stroller or bassinet - for the guest of honor.

"It was really cool because I don't have anybody here, family or anything. It was really nice. They had it all decorated and everything. It was themed for a little girl with pink lemonade and pink popcorn. It was super cute," said Cecilia Thompson of her baby shower, which was held in April, three days before daughter Delilah was due.

"They even had gifts for my husband and kids too. It was really neat," she added. "I didn't have a car seat and they got me a car seat and diapers and stuff. It was really helpful."

The kindness didn't stop there. Thompson said the Showers of Grace family also brought food and offered to help baby-sit after the baby was born.

"We make it as much as we can like a normal baby shower," said Judah Cleveland, who is homeschooled and is a high school senior. She hopes to eventually become a midwife.

"For me, it had a lot to do with the pro-life movement," Judah said of her reason for getting involved. "You have to keep the baby and we need to help. We have to practice what we preach and do something."

The showers are held at St. Patrick's Anglican Church, 151 S. Solano Suite F, and are designed to provide local families in need with material goods, as well as emotional support.

The entire cost of the shower, from the invitations — guests are chosen by the shower recipient — to the gifts and food, are provided free for the expectant mothers.

"I'm very proud of them. They don't just talk about trying to help people; they're actually doing it. They're walking the walk," said Lori Cleveland of her daughters.

Showers of Grace, she said, has also afforded the teens the ability to take skills, like organization and language, that they've learned through they're homeschooling and put them into practice.

"Both are motivated in their Spanish studies and are interested in using Spanish to reach out to clients," she said.

When the teens first presented the idea to Lori Cleveland, her response was: "Go for it."

"They're both very interested in serving the poor and needy and in reaching out. They noticed the needs around them. I think it's great," she said.

To make a donation, or volunteer to help at a shower, call 575-647-4085 or 575-373-3199 or visit [showersofgrace.needscoffee.com](http://showersofgrace.needscoffee.com).

### **How you can help**

Monetary and item donations may be dropped off at St. Patrick's Anglican Church, 151 S. Solano Suite F. Items needed:

- Car seats
- Strollers
- Diapers and diaper bags
- Wipes
- Onesies and other clothes
- Baby monitors
- Pacifiers
- Bath tub and bathing supplies
- Baby proofing supplies
- Baby blankets
- Play pens
- Help is also needed in baking and decorating for the showers.

For more information: 575-647-4085, 575-373-3199, or email [showersofgrace@needscoffee.com](mailto:showersofgrace@needscoffee.com)

On the web: Showers of Grace on Facebook and [showersofgrace.needscoffee.com](http://showersofgrace.needscoffee.com).

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