

Build it and they will receive

From the publisher BY RICHARD COLTHARP

LCHBA Anniversary House again showers support on community

For many of us, the idea of a baby shower is a common one. A friend or family member is expecting, and someone close to the mom-to-be arranges a big, fun day, where everyone brings nice gifts, a covered dish and other goodies.

To go without one, for many, would be unthinkable.

For many others, however, to have one at all would be unimaginable. In many cases, especially here in Doña Ana County, families simply can't afford it.

Particularly if it's an unplanned pregnancy to a young, single mother, planning a shower is at the bottom of the priority list, if it's there at all.

Four years ago, Judah Cleveland, then just 16, recognized this reality.

"I was thinking about ways single moms could be helped," Judah said. "Ways to encourage them and see the blessing of a baby, not just how hard it's going to be."

The thought demonstrated wisdom beyond Judah's years.

"But then I thought, 'I don't think I can,'" she said.

But her sister Annika Cleveland, even wiser at an even younger age (then 14), said, "We can do this!"

The sisters got financial and other support from their church at the time, St. Patrick's Anglican Church.

"They said, 'Go for it!'" Judah said.

Soon they were showering moms in need not only with diapers and baby clothes, but with grace. And that became the name of their organization, Showers of Grace. Judah, now a New Mexico State University sophomore, is the nonprofit's executive director, and they have given more than 160 showers since co-founder Annika offered her encouraging words.

I had not heard of this organization until they received a donation from the Las Cruces Home Builders Association's Anniversary House project.

If you're not familiar, the LCHBA, to celebrate its anniversary, has members pitch in to build a home, providing materials and services at or below cost. When it's complete, and sold, the profits are divvied up and given to 15 local charities.

This year's house generated more than \$80,000. In addition to Showers of Grace, recipients were Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Boys and Girls Club, Tutti Bambini, Jardin de los Niños, Big Brothers Big Sisters, C.A.R.E., Carenet of Las Cruces, Habitat for Humanity, La Piñon Sexual Assault Recovery, Las Cruces Fraternal Order of Police, Gospel Rescue Mission, Mesilla Valley CASA, Turning Point Pregnancy Care Center, and the Community of Hope.

It's an amazing project. Kudos to all involved.

Judah was thrilled at the donation her organization received.

Her comments about Showers of Grace would fit for all of the organizations and the generosity of Las Cruces in general and LCHBA specifically: “People in the community realized there was a need, they liked the idea and we’ve received so much support.”



Las Cruces Home Builders Association Executive Director Steve Chavira led the ceremonies at the Anniversary House Banquet. The sale of the Anniversary House generated more than \$80,000 in funds, which the LCHBA distributed to 15 local charities.