

AZ Giving: Little Pink Houses of Hope

Written by Ashlee Best

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The nonprofit organization [Little Pink Houses of Hope](http://www.littlepinkhousesofhope.org) provides vacation retreats for breast cancer patients and their families. Families from across the United States and Canada bond and connect with other families during the week long retreat. The retreats are located across the United States and in the Virgin Islands. This year for the first time a retreat will be held in Scottsdale beginning on Saturday, May 13.



The Mission

Jeanine Patten-Coble was inspired to start the organization shortly after she was diagnosed with cancer seven years ago. When she was diagnosed, her doctors allowed her to go on a vacation she had been planning with her family. While trying to decide how to tell her son she had cancer, she thought about how important it is for families going through cancer to have a place to go to relax and be together. Scottsdale retreat coordinator, Mary Jo Pazak says, "When Jeanine was done with the vacation she told her son she had cancer and she said when I am well, I am going to start an organization to bring families together and that was her vision." Little Pink Houses of Hope's mission statement is to promote breast cancer recovery by offering opportunities for survivors to reconnect and celebrate life.

Since the beginning, the organization has grown to 15 retreats across the United States. "There will be 15 retreats in the United States this year. They will be in six different states South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Arizona and California," Pazak says. There is also a retreat provided for couples in the US Virgin Islands. One goal for Little Pink Houses of Hope is to continue to do more events on the West Coast. Pazak says, "The goal is expansion, more on the west coast so hopefully getting more into California."

Premiere Scottsdale Retreat

While on the retreat in Scottsdale, the 11 families will have several activities planned during the week. "Once they come, they will have a beautiful home to live in and it will be stocked with food for them and every day they will be given an adventure, an activity and meals for both lunch and dinner," Pazak says.



Planning the Retreats

It took a year to plan the events happening throughout the week. "We began the feasible meeting last April," says Pazak. With the help of volunteers, Pazak was able to connect with businesses throughout the Valley. Pazak says, "I said we need 11 beautiful date night dinners-and I put it out to my committee and the next meeting a month later I had eleven really nice places for them to go to dinner." The volunteers are also

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from all over the United States and, during the retreat, they stay with the families and assist them with whatever they may need. "Volunteers are also coming from all over the country so that every family has their own private concierge. If during the week they have a question, or if during the week they know they are not going to make it to an activity they have somebody they can personally bond with and say we're not coming or we're going to be late so they don't feel in anyway pressure or stress," Pazak says.

When planning the retreats, one of the most important donations was the donation of houses. Pazak and her husband met with Elizabeth Shapiro, who represents a property management company, and Shapiro was able to donate 12 houses. "I explained the concept of the mission of Little Pink Houses of Hope and Elizabeth very graciously said 'I've been looking for a charity to support, this is perfect. What do you need?'" Pazak had a large response from donors willing to donate their house for a week. "We had more donors than we needed homes for," Pazak says.

There will be a wide range of activities happening throughout the week for the families to participate in. Some of the activities include paddle boarding at Saguaro Lake, a Mother's Day tea, a picnic at McCormick Railroad Park, pottery making at the Mesa Arts Center and the families will also attend a Diamondbacks game. On one day, the mothers get to make and keep their own piece of jewelry at Kendra Scott at Scottsdale Quarter, while their children play in the splash pad in the shopping center.

Valley Contributions

While planning the retreat, Pazak says she received support from the community for the Little Pink Houses of Hope organization. "The generosity, the kindness the absolute love of people that I met and asked for donations, it's overwhelming the generosity that is here in this Valley," Pazak says. With help from the community the mission of Little Pink House of Hope was brought to life.



How to Become Involved

You can become involved through donating and volunteering. Pazak says, "People who have time and the have talent and gifts, here is an organization where you can definitely use all of that. I have a friend and she is a photographer she's got a photography company and she is going to photograph every one of these families and give them a professional photography session at McDonald Ranch," Pazak says.

A Lasting Impression

The experience is centered on the family and their being on the trip as a family. "There are not a lot of models like this because a lot of models for cancer patients are for the cancer patient but, this model—Little Pink Houses of Hope—recognizes that it is a whole family and that's the beauty of it," Pazak says. When thinking about the children attending the retreat Pazak says, "The children come, and they get to laugh and just have fun and not worry about their mom going to a doctor's visit. It's going to create hope in their heart and love for not only their own family but other families that are on the same journey."

For more information, visit <https://www.littlepink.org/>.