



# Balloon Angels

## Lifting Children's Spirits

New Format!

Summer  
2006

Quarterly Newsletter  
For volunteers and contributors

### New Balloon Angels website!

At the beginning of May, Balloon Angels launched its new website! You can still find us at [www.balloonangels.org](http://www.balloonangels.org) – it's just our look that has changed. Now you can find out more about us – how we got started, about our volunteers and even some of our accomplishments. You can also find copies of all of our old newsletters. We're also trying to keep an updated calendar for future events. One of the best new features is our picture and comments section. You can view pictures of our volunteers and events and you can read comments from patients and their parents that have received our balloons. You can also read comments from hospital administrators and from our current volunteers. So stop by and visit us at [www.balloonangels.org](http://www.balloonangels.org).



### Focus on our Volunteers...

Mary Leep and Debbie Hagan are this month's "Volunteers of the Month". While we usually focus on just one volunteer each newsletter, Mary and Debbie are an outstanding example of two friends that together, are making a difference in the lives of hundreds of children. Mary says, "We thought Balloon Angels would be a great way to spend time together as friends as well as make an impact in the life of a child. Little did we know how much Balloon Angels would impact our own lives." As you read this article, think of a friend that you may want to spend some time with once a month, making a difference for a hospitalized child.

Mary Leep was born in Cleveland, OH and has lived and was raised in both Illinois and Indiana. She attended Ball State University in Muncie, IN and graduated with her bachelor's degree in education. After graduating, she moved to Indianapolis and met her future husband, Jeff (they lived in the same



apartment complex). Mary and Jeff have been married for 15 years and have three children, Lauren (11) attends Noe Middle School, Emma (7) attends Dunn Elementary and Kristin (3) attends Thomas Jefferson Preschool.

Debbie Hagan was born and raised here in Louisville, KY. She attended Eastern HS and graduated from the University of Louisville with her bachelor's degree in middle school math and science. Debbie met her future husband back in middle school, but they didn't start dating until college and they've been married now for 13 years. They have two children, Diana (5) will attend Goshen Elementary this fall and Jack (3) will go to Watkin's Preschool.



Both Mary and Debbie have a passion for reaching out and helping children. While they are both currently self-described "stay home moms", both have been teachers for the public school system and Mary still employed one day a week at the Sylvan Learning Center in Crestwood where she tutors kids of all ages. Being good friends, they share some of the same common interests and hobbies that include playing tennis, exercising at Curves, reading and scrap booking.

Both Mary and Debbie started with Balloon Angels back in 2004 with Northeast Christian Church's ([www.necchurch.org](http://www.necchurch.org)) Kingdom Assignment II (KAI). KAI challenged church members to reach out into their communities and to serve those in need – Balloon Angels was one of the available options for the congregation to choose from. For the last year and a half, both Mary and Debbie have been two of our most reliable and committed volunteers. "Seeing a child light up from receiving a simple balloon is amazing. It makes me feel good, seeing these children and their families forget about their illness for a moment while choosing their special balloon," Mary says. When asked how she felt when she gave out her first



balloon Debbie said, "I felt like I had given that child a piece of gold!"

When asked why they keep coming back, Debbie says that, "It's the one night a month that I am called "an angel! No seriously, I just love the fact that I'm bringing joy to children (and parents) who desperately need it. I really enjoy volunteering with my friend, Mary, as well. Both of us don't always get to participate each month, but I love knowing that if I can't be there, she usually can." Mary says, "Being a volunteer with Balloon Angels is incredible. Seeing these children and their parents smile is what keeps me coming back to help with Balloon Angels." Mary and Debbie – THANKS FOR ALL THAT YOU DO!

## Yard Sale buys balloons!

On Friday & Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> we participated in the Lake Forest Spring Yard Sale.



First of all, we need to thank all of the volunteers, their neighbors and their friends that donated their unwanted items for the yard sale. What might seem of little value to you is often times an

inexpensive gift for someone else. This year's spring yard sale Balloon Angels made over \$1,500 – one of our most successful yard sales to date! This will provide thousands of balloons for hospitalized children in the Louisville area hospitals!

Once people found out we were fundraising for Balloon Angels and found out exactly what the funds were going to, many people were generous enough to make a donation to Balloon Angels right then. We'll be doing this again for the fall yard sale so start saving your "stuff" now! Call Gina at (502) 253-0855 and we will arrange a time to come to your house and pick up those items.



## Balloon Angels & Serve Fest!

On May 20<sup>th</sup>, May 27<sup>th</sup> and June 17<sup>th</sup> Balloon Angels partnered with Northeast Christian Church



([www.necchurch.org](http://www.necchurch.org)) for their annual Serve Fest 2006 initiative. This community outreach initiative is a one-day serving extravaganza in which Northeast Christian Church makes its presence and love known in the community by serving those around them. They have approximately 16 different service initiatives

available and encourage the congregation to

participate. This is the fourth time that Balloon Angels has participated in this or a similar event with NECC. These types of events have served as a great resource for new volunteers for our team. This time approximately fifty new volunteers signed up to participate with Balloon Angels and on each of the three Saturdays listed above, we took in a balloon to every child at Kosair Children's Hospital. After that experience approximately half of the people expressed interest in joining the Balloon Angels team on a regular basis! We would also like to say a special thanks to our regular oriented volunteers who came in on their Saturdays to help lead these new volunteers around Kosair Children's Hospital. Welcome to all of our new volunteers – we're glad to have you on the team!

## Friends or relatives in Cincinnati?

Balloon Angels is working with a young couple in Cincinnati and we hope to start delivering balloons to hospitalized children in the Cincinnati area later this year. If you have friends and/or relatives in the Cincinnati area, tell them about Balloon Angels and see if they would be interested in taking in free balloons to hospitalized children. Most of our volunteers serve one night per month and it usually only takes a couple of hours. If you think you may have someone that may be interested, call Gina at (502) 253-0855.

## National Magazine appearance!

Jennifer Taylor, a writer for the "Buzz" column in the Christian Standard, read an article on Balloon Angels that appeared in the Northeast Christian Church April/May

**CHRISTIAN STANDARD** newsletter. This article had described the impact that the Balloon Angels team had made on the life of a young cancer victim (see our winter 2005 newsletter). After reading the article, Jennifer contacted Balloon Angels and wrote a great editorial in the "Buzz" section of the magazine. It included a description of what we do and how we got started. You can still find a copy of the article on line by going to their website, ([www.christianstandard.com](http://www.christianstandard.com)), going to the "Buzz" section and scrolling to the bottom of the page for "previous columns" and click on the hyperlink for the "Balloon Ministry Blesses Children".

**Do you have a heart for kids?** If so, we would love to have you on our team! We can always use your help. We're looking to expand to additional hospitals in the Louisville area and even possibly to other metro areas such as Indianapolis, Cincinnati or Lexington. If you or someone you know has a heart for children and may be interested in helping us get started give us a call!

**Comments** – If you have an idea for our newsletter, contact Gary McQuillen at [gary@balloonangels.org](mailto:gary@balloonangels.org)