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Meghan Alfonso believed she could make a difference in her community. Little did she know, she was going to impact 62 families in less than four years.



Before she became the CEO for Pearce Family Foundation, Meghan Alfonso worked for St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation and contributed to raising money in a variety of events. She worked with many families and patients closely, and she would often hear the same story from them: they received attention and love at the hospital, but when they went back home, they were faced with a brutal reality. They couldn't keep up with their expenses and bills. In her heart, Alfonso was also reminded of a friend's nephew, who was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 2, and she experienced the direct effects a chronic illness would have on someone close to her.

That's when she realized she had a chance to give back to the community. Alfonso came up with the idea of Pearce Family Foundation in July 2013 and was approved to start the organization the following year. The foundation, located in Phoenix, exists to financially support families in Arizona with a child from a day old to 17 years old, who is facing chronic or life-threatening illnesses. For some families, the foundation eased the burdens of daily life.

Laurie Shook, mother of Adilynn, 2 (pictured), was facing many struggles before she came across the foundation. Adilynn was diagnosed with many diseases; she had 19 specialists and a severe immune system deficiency. Shook needed a way to pull her family through.

Thanks to the foundation, she quickly received a response and the resources she needed to sustain her family. "The Pearce [Family] Foundation truly has helped us be able to focus on Adilynn and her needs. I cannot thank them enough for the support and how much they truly care about our family," Shook says. "It's been the biggest blessing."

Alfonso says Pearce Family takes into consideration those suffering from all chronic illnesses, and she has helped kids affected by dialysis, bone cancer, heart problems and more illnesses in the past. "I wanted to be able to help families and let them know there are people out there [who] care," Alfonso says. "There's always someone in need."

Since the beginning, she says the foundation has awarded \$58,000 back to the community. The foundation's main initiative is Angels Around Us of Arizona, which assists families with rent, mortgage payments, transportation needs, car payments and more, with the goal to relieve the stress and focus on a child's journey to get well.

Angel Pups, the organization's newest program, was created to financially support children in need of a service dog. In 2015, the Executive Council Charities approved the initiative and awarded the foundation a grant to be able to start the program.

Nichole McCure, mother of Evan, the first recipient of the Angel Pup program, says the addition of a dog in her son's life was life-changing for them. Since then, his ability to cope with situations that would have typically caused anxiety has greatly improved and his self-confidence has skyrocketed. "The grant they gifted us is going to an infinite impact," McCure says.

As part of its annual contribution, the organization sets up three major events to raise funds (a fashion show in May, Clays for a Cause in October and a toy drive at the end of the year) and is always looking for volunteers to help them host the events.

In the future, Alfonso says she would like to help immediately with any request she receives and keep growing as a resource for families and children. "We are here to show there are angels in our community."

To Learn More

Pearce Family Foundation pearcefamilyfoundation.com.