



THE CARING PLACE

Another Season of Caring in Our Community

CARING COMES FULL CIRCLE

Anyone can experience a financial crisis and Tommy Bailey knows firsthand. In late 2009, Tommy experienced a turn in life that would impact her in both a challenging and wonderful way. Shortly after becoming new parents, her significant other lost his job. With the hopes of better opportunities, they moved from Burnet to Georgetown in January of 2010. Tommy says moving to Georgetown was the best decision she ever made, although a struggle came first. And, as Tommy shared, "You can't know good without experiencing some bad." However, she's glad the bad now feels like a distant memory.

The loss of a job in Burnet wasn't the only challenge in 2009. When the pair planted themselves in Georgetown, they began a job search. It took her significant other over a month to find something part-time and even with that position, his hourly pay was significantly less than what he was used to. Tommy wrestled with the decision to find a job or care for her infant. She knew childcare costs would likely eat up her paycheck in a hurry so she took on a variety of odd jobs like cleaning houses or mowing lawns to bring a few extra dollars into the household. Her significant other also took on a second job to help make ends meet. At some point in their first eight months in Georgetown, the hard working pair fell behind making a utility payment. Then, things got worse; the car fell into disrepair. Tommy said, "I remember thinking, we have to fix the car to keep a job or pay the light bill. We chose to fix the car to keep the job, and we got further behind on the light bill."

Tommy can't remember where she heard about The Caring Place. She thinks that maybe a neighbor told her about the organization, but during that first year in Georgetown The Caring Place is where she ended up. "I came in to get help with my light bill. I remember the volunteer that helped me wouldn't let me leave until I signed up for the Food Pantry, too." Tommy shook her head with a laugh, "That wasn't what we needed help with." Tommy explained how that food helped more than she thought it would and she was grateful she signed up for the food program. She and her little family utilized the Food Pantry for three months. With The Caring Place's help, they got caught up on car and utility payments and continued to live in Georgetown, this time with better things around the corner.

Her significant other found better employment and she found a part-time job at Georgetown's Washatopia. The owner at the time didn't mind that she brought her daughter to work from time to time, as she and her significant other traded childcare duties. For this reason, Tommy mostly worked nights so her child had care at home. After a couple of years of hard work, Tommy became the Manager of Washatopia. Then, at the end of 2015, the owner said, "If you're ready to buy. I am ready to sell." Tommy admitted she laughed at first, but then quickly realized it wasn't a joke, and jumped at the opportunity. On January 1st of 2016 Tommy Bailey became a business owner.



Tommy Bailey, 2019 during Food Drive Season

"Georgetown is an amazing community. At Washatopia I've seen families grow up. I've seen people fall in love, get married, graduate. I've always wanted to be a business owner, and this community is what I love seeing at Washatopia."

Tommy is serious about her community. In 2019, when The Caring Place struggled with empty Food Pantry shelves, Tommy stepped up and requested a blue barrel to have a Food Drive at her Washatopia. That's when we first reconnected with Tommy realizing her history with TCP. She shared, "I reached out because I have a personal connection to The Caring Place, but it's important to me to give back to my community." In 2021, Tommy learned about a new nonprofit in Georgetown called Laundry Love. This program allowed families to do their laundry for free. Owing Washatopia, Tommy knew exactly the cost of doing your laundry when you didn't have access to your own machine. She also knew supporting periodic free laundry events would help a lot of families. The cost of clean laundry is more than another bill to pay for families. It's about parents feeling confident at their jobs, kids feeling like they fit in at school and, at Washatopia, it's also about community. Tommy's Washatopia became the host site for the Laundry Love program approximately twice a month. Households can get up to 12 loads of laundry paid for by a volunteer host organization and Tommy contributes as well.

Tommy's Story Continued...



In August 2024, this laundry program joined the offerings at The Caring Place. Rebranded as "Loads of Caring," Tommy is once again connected to a mission and organization that helped her family get on their feet. Loads of Caring continues to offer people community at Washatopia as they gather together to do laundry, chat, watch their children and offer gratitude for a program lessening the burden of laundry costs. Tommy says, "I always encourage people to go to The Caring Place whether they need help, or they want to donate or even shop." Tommy knows how that little bit of help can get you back on track and now she's part of that at The Caring Place with Loads of Caring.



Keep reading to learn more about Loads of Caring at The Caring Place

PROGRAM UPDATES

Loads of Caring at Washatopia



The Caring Place Executive Director, Ginna O'Connor and former Laundry Love Georgetown Executive Director, Leslie Hearne

This summer, Laundry Love Georgetown transitioned to The Caring Place's offering of services. Leslie Hearne, the Executive Director of Laundry Love Georgetown, stepped down after nine years of leadership, but the legacy of this important service she stewarded will continue. "We are honored that Leslie is entrusting this impactful and well-run program she's built to The Caring Place," says Erin Becnel, Programs and Services Director at The Caring Place. "Laundry Love perfectly complements our mission of providing basic needs to our neighbors."

The free laundry program, rebranded "Loads of Caring," operates on the second Tuesday and last Thursday of each month from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Georgetown Washatopia (1910 South Austin Avenue) with fewer dates in November and December due to the holidays. Families or individuals who would like free laundry services simply show up during event times and volunteer host teams will provide the payment for neighbors to wash up to 12 baskets of laundry with unlimited drying time.



Back to School Vouchers

The fall can be a financially stressful time for families with kids in school. To help, The Caring Place offers supplementary Back to School vouchers for children. These vouchers can be utilized for clothing, backpacks and school supplies. This is the second year The Caring Place has offered this program and there are already plans to offer it again in 2025

This year, 224 vouchers were redeemed to help families with back to school expenses in our thrift stores. These vouchers had a combined value of \$3,053.16! We hope families in our community have a wonderful 2024-2025 school year!



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Here's what we are seeing in 2024...

From January through September 2024, The Caring Place has experienced unprecedented growth in the number of people presenting for assistance. Through September, The Caring Place has assisted 9,903 unduplicated neighbors with basic human needs – already more people helped than for the whole year in 2023.


While The Caring Place assists families financially with rent, mortgage, utilities, transportation, and medical expenses, the help we provide with food and thrift store vouchers has been the most highly utilized in 2024. In particular, the increase in the number of neighbors presenting for the Food Pantry and Healthy Options Program for the Elderly (HOPE) has been staggering. An average of 4,014 individuals per month received Food Pantry assistance through September, an increase of 43% over the previous year. The total number of pounds distributed is 841,658 which is valued at \$2,718,555. HOPE typically assists over 400 neighbors monthly; 416 adults were assisted in September of 2024 compared to 113 just two years ago.

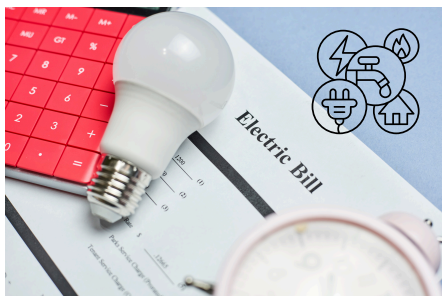
You Are Making An Impact: Survey Update

Over the years, The Caring Place has attempted to get feedback from neighbors about their experience at The Caring Place with limited success. Because this feedback is critical to improving services, The Caring Place contracted with Luminosa Research to better understand how it meets the community's needs, what it can improve, and why people choose to use its services.

In April, a survey was administered with 590 completed surveys. Additionally, 34 people participated in four focus groups. We were thrilled with not only the high response rate but more importantly, to find that almost all (97%) survey respondents said, "The financial assistance I got from The Caring Place helped me through a money crisis." Almost all (94%) said, "The Caring Place helped me during a hard time." **Due to your support, we are meeting our mission!**

While the feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, our neighbors had some constructive suggestions to improve services. An ad hoc committee of Board and staff members has been formed to review and make recommendations regarding the survey, so you will be hearing more about the results and the actions that The Caring Place is taking in response to the feedback.

In the meantime, know that when you give a financial gift to The Caring Place those funds are meaningfully helping our neighbors. 



How the Good Neighbor Fund Helps & You Can, Too!

Do you know about a great program offered by the City of Georgetown to help neighbors who are struggling to pay their utility bill? The City sponsors the Good Neighbor Fund that assists eligible Georgetown Utility customers. The funds for this program come from voluntary contributions from customers like you. The Caring Place determines a person's eligibility for the program and contributes 51% of the payment for the bill; the City pays the other 49% through the Good Neighbor Fund. Through August 2024, 122 City of Georgetown utility customers have received \$36,799 in bill assistance through the program.

Contributions to the fund can be made by paying the total due on your City of Georgetown utility bill, plus one dollar (or more). You can make a one-time or recurring contribution that can be canceled at any time. You can enroll in this program to help your neighbors by simply checking the box on your utility bill each month and writing the check for \$1 more, or by completing the pledge form online at the City's website.





HAPPY & HEALTHY HOLIDAYS



Switch those Food Drives to Hygiene Drives!

During the months of October, November and December, you normally find The Caring Place promoting the Food Pantry needs with a "Hunger Free Holidays" campaign to help neighbors in need. However, The Caring Place is always looking for ways to be the most help to people with limited budgets. This year we have kept our Food Pantry full by utilizing our community partnerships and relationship with the Central Texas Food Bank to purchase food at a discounted price. There is one thing that is challenging for us to buy affordably though, and it is expensive for those on a limited budget too, and that is hygiene items. In this last quarter of the year, start a new tradition by collecting shampoo, conditioner, soap, deodorant, shaving cream, feminine hygiene products and other necessities to keep our friends and neighbors "Healthy for the Holidays." Bring new hygiene items to our Food Pantry reserved parking spot on the north side of our 2000 Railroad building, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. You can also bring hygiene items to our Donations drive through Monday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

WHAT DO WE NEED?*

- Deodorant
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Toilet Paper
- Shampoo/Conditioner
- Shaving Cream
- Soap

WHERE TO TAKE IT:

Monday through Saturday
 2000 Railroad Ave. Drive Through
 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
 or
 Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri
 2000 Railroad Ave. Reserved Food
 Pantry Parking Space in North
 Parking Lot, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

*Food Drives are welcome through the holidays, however hygiene items are our biggest need. Call 512-943-0738 to set up a drive with a blue barrel.

Or, help us meet the growing need in our community by making a monetary donation to The Caring Place this season. Send a check to PO Box 1215, Georgetown, TX 78627 or donate online at caringplacetx.org/donate. Your gift matters!



Calling All Sponsors



Volunteers Frank Espinosa (left) and Reg Brockwell (right) pose with Commander Abran Yates. These local VFW leaders encouraged their post to sponsor this giving event in 2024 due to their commitment to the community.

Are you a business owner, decision maker or civic group looking to grow your impact in the community through a sponsorship? Beyond food and hygiene drives, being a sponsor in our annual Amplify giving event is another impactful way to give in your community. The Amplify campaign begins in late January, so **NOW** is the time to secure your spot as a Sponsor.

Generous sponsors led to big giving in 2024, making it our most successful Amplify event to date. In 2025, The Caring Place will celebrate its 40th year helping neighbors in need, and we can't imagine a better time to be part of this special campaign. Contact Rita at rturner@caringplacetx.org or 512-943-0702 before January 19th.

You can also download your sponsorship application at caringplacetx.org/sponsor.

I Live Here I Give Here

Amplify
Georgetown

SHOPPING FOR GOOD AT THE BARGAIN BINS



Assistant Retail Manager Dena Ashby regularly helps customers fill their brown bags and teaches them how to fit more in the bag by tightly rolling clothing. Staff and Volunteers ensure customers understand how the Bargain Bins work Monday through Friday during regular store hours.

Bargain Bins at The Caring Place launched at The Shops at The Caring Place at 2000 Railroad Avenue in August. What are they? The red bins are filled with clothing and textiles and are available Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. near the back of the store. For only \$5, customers can fill a paper bag from these bins.

"Our bargain bin area should be a win-win for everyone," says Ann Lind, Sales Director. "We'll be able to offer more merchandise to our customers and be more environmentally conscious by reducing waste." Lind continues, "Bargain Bin items are looking for another chance. They didn't meet the requirements to make it on the main store floor but are too good to scrap. In some cases, our sorters found small imperfections; in other cases, the store doesn't have space for off-season merchandise. Either way, customers will benefit."

The Caring Place is especially excited that filling a bag with clothes for only \$5 can help families with their budget. Households using vouchers as payment may also take advantage of the Bargain Bins. Fashionistas, textile lovers, and extreme thrifters are all welcome as The Caring Place embarks on this new endeavor to reduce waste.

Bargain Bin Volunteers Needed



Our Bargain Bins need volunteers! Volunteers can help us efficiently sell these clothes with the wonderful customer service our community is accustomed to! If you are interested in a volunteer position, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Dennis at dhilgeman@caringplacetx.org or 512-943-0708.

We now have one-time group volunteer opportunities in our store for businesses and community groups!



At \$5 per bag, Bargain Bins make clothing more affordable than ever.



Holiday Shopping at Two Locations

You can find decor and gifts to help you celebrate every holiday in our two thrift stores.



The Shops at The Caring Place
2000 Railroad Avenue
Georgetown, Texas
512-943-0700

Open Mon - Sat,
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.



Second Helping
3700 Williams Drive
Georgetown, Texas
512-987-2998

Open Tues - Sat,
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

If you love shopping here, you might consider volunteering in other areas of the store, too! We need cashiers, pricers, merchandisers and donation receivers! Apply to be a volunteer in any department at caringplacetx.org/volunteer.



DONATING ITEMS THROUGH CONSTRUCTION



YES! You can still donate items!

Bring your gently used or new items to our 2000 Railroad Avenue drive through, **Monday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.** Construction is going well, but not quite complete and your donations are incredibly important during the holiday season. After you donate, don't forget to shop!



Check Our Hours Through the Holidays!

Learn more about what we take at caringplacetx.org/donatemystuff.

Navigate our Donations drive through hours by staying up to date with us on Social Media, our website or our electronic newsletters.



The mission of The Caring Place is to provide for the basic human needs of all people in our community in a welcoming, respectful and caring way.



"I came in to get help with my light bill. I remember the volunteer that helped me wouldn't let me leave until I signed up for the Food Pantry, too." Tommy shook her head with a laugh, "That wasn't what we needed help with." - Tommy explained that extra food helped more than she expected.



Programs & Services
 Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 2001 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

Food Pantry
 Mon, Tues, Wed, Fri, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 2000 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

The Shops at The Caring Place
 Thrift Store, Mon-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 2000 Railroad Avenue, Georgetown

Second Helping
 Thrift Store, Tues-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 3700 Williams Drive, Georgetown
 512-987-2998

Check for new temporary hours!
 Item Donations
 Mon-Sat, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 2000 Railroad Avenue drive through, Georgetown
 512-943-0700
caringplacetx.org



PO Box 1215
Georgetown, TX 78627-1215