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Donations help residents take first steps as parents

Baby's Bounty provides needy with free items for newborns

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For families unprepared for the stork's visit, Kim Amato is the necessities-wielding fairy godparent trailing closely behind.

Amato is founder and CEO of Baby's Bounty, a nonprofit organization devoted to providing essential clothing and gear to babies born into disadvantaged families.

By the end of this month, Baby's Bounty expects to have helped 1,000 newborn recipients take home a diaper bag filled with new and gently used infant items and safe equipment to sleep and travel in.

Since July 2008, Amato has worked with 60 local service agencies to help low-income families leave the hospital equipped to care for their new addition.

"I'm not a social worker," she said. "I'm just a girl with a dream."

Baby's Bounty's offices, 2295 Renaissance Drive, Suite D, is a lily pad for the donated goods Amato distributes almost every day. Shelves of organized infant clothing, receiving blankets, bottles, diaper bags, toys and toiletries await their new owners. Portable cribs, car seats and bathtubs -- purchased in bulk -- are stacked in the corner, at the ready.

Amato receives an average of 10 referrals a day for cases that include victims of domestic abuse, teen mothers and those living in poverty.

"I hear from NICU (neonatal intensive-care unit) nurses who tell me people leave (the hospital) with nothing all the time," she said. "I've heard of fathers taking off their own shirts to wrap the baby in to go home."

Amato doesn't meet recipients -- a decision of her own making -- but she feels the love, she said.

She receives cards and photos and she laughs about some of the more secondhand affection.

"The case workers say, 'We get all your hugs and kisses,' " she said.



Donations drive the Baby's Bounty machine.

Amato accepts new and gently used items from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday in the office. She's working to expand locations for her signature cardboard boxes for donations.

She spends a lot of time stretching gift card and monetary donation dollars via thrift stores, online deals and bargain basement sales around town. Employees at the Burlington Coat Factory know her by name when she stops by to scoop up discount diaper bags.

"They wave and say, 'We put some aside for you,' " she said.

When the economic state of the nation changed, so did the business.

Contributions of Pack 'N Play portable cribs and car seats, which retail for between about \$50 and \$200, and donations lessened but never ceased during recent months, she said.

"It's coming in different ways," Amato said.

Good Samaritans opted to offer gift cards in smaller amounts or host "mock baby showers" with friends to pool resources.

They helped plan other creative fundraisers, such as the Stroller Roll for Children's Safety, a charity walk scheduled for 9 a.m. April 16 at Tracy's Boutique, 1990 Village Center Circle, Suite 9. Participants are asked to pay \$10 to participate that day or virtually on the website.

In November, the Women's Group of Summerlin selected Baby's Bounty to be the recipient of proceeds from its 15th annual charity event. The group raised \$18,409, an amount smaller than past gifts, group president Sue Bryan said.

"It was a tough year. Certainly the economy had some play in it," she said. "We thought, 'If it was a smaller (gift) amount, would it still make an impact to this organization?' and we felt it would."

Bryan said Baby's Bounty's "We're small but we're mighty" mission mirrored that of the Women's Group of Summerlin.

"Everything lined up," she said.

The Kids Do Care Foundation chose Baby's Bounty as its main charity for the upcoming year.

For those who can't make monetary or goods donations, Amato welcomes volunteers to help in the office and during events. She also invites individuals to help with social campaigns that Baby's Bounty supports.

BABY'S BOUNTY

Amato plans to travel to Carson City in April to help champion children's issues during the legislative session. During the 2011 legislative session, she helped introduce Senate Bill 172, which would promote safe sleep practices.

Amato, a mother herself, said she feels for the new parents aided by Baby's Bounty.

"I feel like we're serving a demographic that wasn't served before," she said. "This is a small piece in the puzzle to let them know there is help out there."

For more information, visit babysbounty.org or call 485-2229.

Contact Centennial and Paradise View reporter Maggie Lillis at mlillis@viewnews.com or 477-3839.



Photos Special to ViewTop, Baby's Bounty founder Kim Amato, center, assists volunteers Denise Amlie, right, and Carrol Kuhlow as they organize baby goods March 8. Bottom, the nonprofit organization, 2295 Renaissance Drive, Suite D, collects new and gently used clothes, car seats, portable cribs and other essential items to distribute to financially struggling recipients with newborns.



Photos Special to ViewTop, Baby's Bounty founder Kim Amato, center, assists volunteers



Denise Amlie, right, and Carrol Kuhlow as they organize baby goods March 8. Bottom, the nonprofit organization, 2295 Renaissance Drive, Suite D, collects new and gently used clothes, car seats, portable cribs and other essential items to distribute to financially struggling recipients with newborns.

