

## Giving Back is a Family Affair

By Matt Beardmore

**G**rowing up, Yvonne Knaack learned how nice it was to help others when she watched her grandmother lend a helping hand to those in need.

Now retired and with seven grandchildren of her own, Knaack, the secretary of the Kiwanis Club of Glendale, is setting a great example for her family on how important it is to give back.

"I didn't live around her a lot growing up, but my grandmother was always helping people," said Knaack, who has lived in the Valley since 1960. "When I was attending Maryvale High School (in Phoenix), I started getting involved in clubs like student council and being named the treasurer of my senior class."

Knaack, retired after working 49 years for State Farm – including the last 26 as an agent – served on the Glendale City Council from 2007-2014 and was the city's first female Vice Mayor in 2013-14. She sits on the Salvation Army Advisory Board in Glendale, is the secretary and member of Heart For the City, a Glendale-based non-profit that helps at-risk children, and is part of the Historic Downtown Glendale Merchants Association.

Since 1996, Knaack has been a member of the Kiwanis Club, which has a long history of helping children in need. Founded in 1915 as a business networking organization, the club "changed its focus to service in 1919 – specifically to children." There are now Kiwanis clubs in approximately 80 countries, and for its recently completed administrative year, its members served 7.3 million total hours while completing 241,000 service projects and raising \$340 million to benefit children, families and communities.

"I've always felt the need to give back, especially to children," Knaack said. "I truly believe you get what you give."

Knaack has served in multiple roles in the Kiwanis Club, including secretary for at least 15 years and president on two

separate occasions. Knaack, also a Glendale Chamber of Commerce board member, appreciates the support the Kiwanis Club receives from the chamber membership and Robert Heidt, Jr., president and CEO.

"It's great because we have at least four other chamber members who are members of the Kiwanis Club," Knaack said. "We have a mutual partnership where we go and support each other like the other night during an event at Saguaro Grill in Glendale for OCJ Kids (whose president and founder, Gary Webb, has been a Kiwanis Club member for more than 13 years)."

Donating pajamas and hygiene items for foster kids with OCJ Kids is just one of many Kiwanis Club service projects. Another one is donating teddy bears to Glendale's public safety (police and/or fire) departments so they can hand those out to children in crisis situations. Knaack's 4-year-old granddaughter, Ava, has been helping her put the teddy bears in bags for that project.

Knaack's daughter, Jessica Leiler, is the Kiwanis Club of Glendale's treasurer and a member of the club for 17 years, her daughter, Kali, a San Diego resident, has volunteered for a number of organizations over the years, including the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life of Glendale, the Kiwanis Club, and Special Olympics, and her stepdaughter, Kathy Prior, who lives in Nassau Bay, Texas, is also a dedicated volunteer at her children's schools and a coordinator of many community events in Nassau Bay.

"My family has been very involved in giving back," Knaack said. "To see them follow in my footsteps means a lot to me."

For more information on how you can volunteer or donate to the Kiwanis Club of Glendale, please visit <https://www.kiwanisclubofglendale.com>.

