



One local resident is using her photography skills to raise money and awareness for children in the community. Debi Gomez, owner of Life's Images Photography, has been photographing newborns and children since the birth of her first child. What began as a hobby at home soon grew into a business where she could capture life's moments for families in every stage, from engagement to maternity to the family growing with children. But she has a wider scope in her photography – she seeks to give back to the residents in Kingwood, Spring, The Woodlands and surrounding areas by helping raise money for local charities.

Each year Gomez selects a charity and produces a calendar to sell and raise funds to benefit the selected charity. Now in its third year the Calendar of Hope has raised over \$15,000 for area charities. "I developed the idea for the Hope Calendar because I wanted to be more involved in a charity project and I wanted more people to be involved as well," Gomez said.

This is Gomez' third calendar, themed "Hearts of Hope" and features children from It's My Heart charity as well as children from the Kingwood, Spring, and Woodlands communities as well as children from the Houston area. The children are seen with light hearted smiles, free from worry, in their innocence and natural beauty. The calendar not only inspires hope for children with congenital heart defects but it serves to turn hope into reality by raising funds. Already the calendar has raised over \$6,000 to benefit It's My Heart.

It's My Heart is a non-profit organization that raises awareness about Acquired and Congenital Heart Defects which are the #1 birth defect of babies. They provide support and advocacy for those affected, and seek to educate people about this condition which affects about 1 out of every 100 babies, and kills nearly twice as many children each year in the U.S. than all forms of childhood cancers combined. They work to create alliances with fellow families, hospitals, support groups and the community working for a better future for these children.

The calendars are now only \$5 and they're going fast! This is a great gift of love and hope for someone special that you can give for Valentine's Day, or as a New Year gift to bring New Hope to these children.

Half of the children in the calendar are from the featured charity, showing the faces of the young children affected by congenital heart defects. The smiling faces in April and October are from Kingwood, and the children shown in February and December are from Spring.

This is truly a community project that welcomes the help of sponsors and volunteers alike. "Local businesses sponsor the cost of printing and some very special volunteer moms and business owners help to get the calendar out," shared Gomez. Sponsors for the 2010 Hope Calendar were Woodlands Family Magazine, Kingwood Merry Go Round, Morningside Nannies, H.H. Landscapes, Seagraves United Methodist Women, The Potpourris – Tomball and Magnolia, The Suns – Champions, Klein, Cy-Fair and Cypress, Huggabeans Custom Knits, Ginger Louise, Bow and More by Gracylu, Baby ChaCha, Fabrics to Sew, and Fashion Wings. With their sponsorship the calendar has been a success.

If you would like to be part of Hope Calendar project this year or next you can participate by purchasing a calendar, selling calendars to people in the community or even sign up to have your child featured in next year's calendar. Gomez will be taking applications for models for the 2011 calendar at the end of February on her website. For more information or to purchase a calendar please visit www.hopecalendar.com. If you would like help by becoming a sponsor for a month or a title sponsor for the entire year please contact Debi at admin@hopecalendar.com.