

Larry and Peggy Norwood founded Neighborhood Kidz Club in an effort to make a difference in the lives of children in their community

Neighborhood Kidz Club



Katyites Peggy and Larry Norwood felt a calling to create an organization that could reach out to children in their community struggling with social and emotional needs

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For the past eight years, the Neighborhood Kidz Club (NKC) has been ministering to and loving on residents in the Western Pines mobile home community in Katy. What started as a backyard Bible Club has now grown into a full-fledged operation reaching thousands of people in the area. Residents of Katy for 22 years, Peggy and Larry Norwood now devote their time and energy to running NKC, along with hundreds of volunteers, throughout the year.

A Dream Realized

Peggy always had a passion for children's ministry, and for years she prayed for an opportunity to serve the residents of Katy in a tangible and meaningful way. After seeing similar ministries in West Texas and Mexico get off the ground and witnessing the magnitude of outreach, she knew it needed to happen here. Enter Grace Fellowship UMC and Kingsland Baptist Church who committed to serve the Western Pines subdivision yearly. After seeing first-hand the families and children impacted through those service days, the Norwoods saw it could be an ongoing ministry opportunity. So in 2009, they stepped out in faith to invite kids to a Bible Club, kicking off the registration with games, clowns, prizes, and 100 children in attendance. From there, it was off and running with 50 kids in regular attendance that first year.

Growing With Purpose

Founded on Biblical principles, Matthew 27:37-40; Luke 14:23; and Matthew 28:19-20, NKC quickly realized that in order to effectively meet the needs of the residents, they needed more space and a permanent presence. So in 2010 the Norwoods purchased a trailer and began offering after-school tutoring in addition to the Bible Club. "We needed to build deeper relationships with the children and the families," Peggy says. "It was the best way to find out their exact needs and know how to help."

Just a couple of years later, the National Charity League Azalea Chapter partnered with NKC to offer a summer reading program. The first summer over 60 children participated and collectively read 6,000 books. From there, the program has continued to grow each year and books now overflow their two libraries in addition to their lending libraries within the community. They also opened the Kidz Club Learning Center offering homework assistance three days a week to the children and is mostly staffed by volunteers. With many of the parents being non-English speakers, the service has been invaluable in setting the kids up for success in and outside of the classroom. Through after-school tutoring and NCL sponsored reading, NKC is affecting literacy and academic excellence in the lives of many children, youth, and families.

Lives Forever Changed

Since the NKC began their programs, the Harris County Sheriff's office noted a 42% drop in the crime rate around Western Pines. Additionally, within the Garden Villa subdivision, another community where NKC has a distinct presence, they are paying less money each year on repairing vandalism and graffiti. Two churches have been established through their ministry and now they have influenced clubs in 12 different communities, as far reaching as Irving, Texas and North Carolina.

The staff has hundreds of stories on the impact from the club, but one rang particularly meaningful. Two little girls came to NKC and had a simple request, to receive their own Bible. Through relationship building, the volunteers learned that their father had leukemia, the parents were separated, and life was difficult at home. With loving intervention on the family, the little girls' parents are now back together, serving as a family in the Garden Villa community church, along with singing in the choir.

Forging Ahead

NKC continues to expand year after year, adding new communities and new programs for elementary-aged and junior high-aged children. Partnering with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and local churches, NKC is offering everything from block parties for the residents to summer activities and camps including sports, music, science, dance, horse, cheer, and art camps. New NKC communities beyond Katy and the U.S. include the early stages of training and planning in Malaysia and the Philippines.

They currently have two full-time staff members and three part-time, while also depending upon hundreds of volunteers to assist with after-school tutoring. Peggy remains focused on continuing their mission to affect the lives of children, youth, and families in the Katy/Houston area and beyond. She passionately encourages others to join her in the mission. "Keep your eyes open. There is always somewhere you can make a difference," she says. "Even in your own backyard." **KM**

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Volunteers help students with their crafts during Bible club



NKC hosts after-school tutoring, backyard Bible clubs, block parties, and summer events