

Heroes Among Us

# Deb O'Halloran Gives Struggling New Moms and Their Babies Much-Needed Supplies

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**Deb O'Halloran**

COURTESY DEB O'HALLORAN

When single mom Theresa Wilson worried about getting the things she needed for her newborn girl – relief and much-needed assistance came from a stranger.

"My reaction was shock, surprise and relief that I didn't have to go out and try to scramble up enough money to pay for these things," says Wilson, 22, who received a bassinet, floor gym and starter bag of critical-care items. "Having all these things is one big issue I won't have to worry about, because I already have a lot on my plate with being a new mom and caring for the baby."

Wilson's life and the lives of hundreds of other moms and their newborns have been changed by the St. Paul-Minneapolis area [Second Stork](#) nonprofit and its founder, Deb O'Halloran – whose goal is to help provide a stress-free start for hundreds of new moms at nearly 20 hospitals in the St. Paul-Minneapolis area.

In 2009, along with a small group of like-minded philanthropists, O'Halloran launched Second Stork, initially gathering baby items such as diapers and other basic necessities in her own laundry room to deliver to new mothers in crisis in hospital labor/delivery units.

"We wanted to operate in a way that was highly efficient yet ensured that the help went to the people who needed it the most," says O'Halloran, 55, a married mother of two who was formerly a marketing executive. "We were motivated simply by our desire to help people in crisis, while respecting their dignity."

Much of Second Stork's inventory consists of surplus items supplied by various retailers. At its donated, 3,400-square-foot warehouse, volunteer groups along with O'Halloran pack bags that are then given to hospitals for distribution to grateful moms by social workers, nurses or other staff. To date, Second Stork has delivered more than 1,000 bags to Twin City-area hospitals.

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**Deb O'Halloran (left) with Second Stork volunteers**

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"Second Stork fills a unique niche for families, particularly those that are financially strapped," says hospital social worker Rachael Stover-Haney. "We can just hand the items to them. Many of the mothers are moved to tears, but more than that, they're dumbfounded and amazed, because it restores their faith that there is goodness in the world."

The recipients, says O'Halloran, are mothers who have few, if any, other options. No one has thrown them a baby shower, so the Second Stork bag is often the only gift they'll receive.

"Some don't even know where they're going to go when they leave the hospital," she says. "By providing critical-care supplies, we're letting them know that there are people out there who really do care and understand."

For moms like Wilson, the support of O'Halloran's Second Stork has been a huge help. "I feel grateful that people would care this much for someone they've never met," she says.