



Kristine Kassel, Melissa Steimer, Kim Tarnopolski, and Teddy



**community impact**

By Kim Tarnopolski

**100+ women**  
**WHO CARE**  
*Donates \$16,000 to*  
*Gabriel's Angels*

Hope, healing, and a hug from a furry friend are what Arizona's at-risk children need most in times of stress and uncertainty. According to the Arizona Department of Child Safety, child abuse and neglect reports have gone up 25% in the past year. Most Arizona kids were at home with online learning during the onset of the pandemic. This resulted in fewer cases being recognized because children were not in the public eye. When schools returned to in-person, more cases were reported.

Thankfully, there is a local nonprofit focused on helping these children establish core behaviors essential to their growth, recovery, and development. Founded in 2000 by Pam Gaber and her Weimaraner, Gabriel, Gabriel's Angels' mission is to inspire confidence, compassion, and best behaviors through pet therapy. Individual Pet Therapy Teams visit crisis nurseries, domestic violence, homeless shelters, and Title I schools. The idea is to enhance the emotional and behavioral development of the children through healthy attachments, confidence, self-regulation, affiliation, empathy, tolerance, and respect. Twice monthly, for approximately one hour, partner agencies who serve at-risk kids host Gabriel's Angels volunteer Therapy Teams, providing hundreds of activities to engage the children.



Kristine and Teddy with students from Carlson Elementary School

Kristine Kassel and her dog, Teddy, have been a Therapy Team for over a year. Kristine has been involved with Gabriel's Angels in various roles for several years but being on a Therapy Team is the most rewarding of them all. She and Teddy visit John and Carol Carlson Elementary School every other week. Teddy works one-on-one with a child and helps them feel wanted. He provides unconditional love during overwhelming times in their lives. "The kids call it Teddy Tuesday! You can just see the excitement and comfort the kids get from our visits," shared Kristine.

In January, Kristine shared the mission of Gabriel's Angels with her 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun group in Ahwatukee. The members were moved by her presentation and selected the charity to receive their quarterly donations. Gabriel's Angels was awarded \$16,000 to train more Therapy Teams.

Since the chapter's inception in 2015, over \$850,000 has been donated to local charities through 100+ Women Who Care Valley of the Sun. To learn more or to register for their upcoming giving circle on April 12 at the Foothills Golf Club, visit [100wvcvalleyofthesun.org](http://100wvcvalleyofthesun.org).

To learn more about Gabriel's Angels, visit [gabrielsangels.org](http://gabrielsangels.org).