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Pam Washek | Angel

Many people talk about “paying it forward” but Pam could write instructions for actually doing so.

Friends and neighbors took care of her family when she was diagnosed with cancer in 2002, and when she recovered she was determined that the network of help and good works shouldn't end. That's when she started the first of the local Angel Networks, which has grown virally to encompass 14 communities. “Eighty percent of what we do is cooking, because it helps families in these tragic situations to maintain a sense of normalcy, and that helps to keep families together.” Early next year, Pam expects to take the Angel Network national, employing computer software that allows members to sign up to make one meal or a dozen. “There's no shortage of people who want to do something like this.”

Photo by Shannon Power