



## **Lisa Wang named 2008 Community Angel**

by Kim James

One pair of best friends combined their passion for turning cast off goods into fab finds with a desire to help families and animals and created a resale shop that uses both donations and proceeds for a greater good.

Lisa Wang is the recipient of the Community Angel award for providing hope and assistance in our community, leaving a positive mark on others and serving as an excellent role model in our community.

Wang was nominated by Rev. Shay St. John, minister at Unity Church of North Houston.

Rev. St. John says, “Lisa inspires others to ‘own’ their unique part of her dream.”

Helping Hearts Resale Heaven is a resale shop located on the grounds of Unity Church of North Houston. Items are donated by people and organizations all over Houston. Volunteers sift through the items and display those that can be used by young mothers, struggling families and other individuals in need.

“We have never had to solicit donations,” Wang says. “They just come our way.”

Nothing goes to waste here – surplus items are donated to Aldine Assistance Ministries and other groups who take needed clothes and supplies to Mexico.

Before Helping Hearts Resale Heaven was a reality, Wang and co-founder Natalie Thompson would spend weekends running a traveling garage sale. Wang says the two would find ways to recycle items people donated so that someone else would benefit from it.

Wang remembers, “We talked about winning the lottery and becoming professional dumpster divers for 10 years.”

They didn’t hit the jackpot, but did find a space to make their traveling exhibition a more permanent fixture when Unity Church moved to a larger location. In its three years of operation, the shop has moved into its own building on the church grounds and is open three days a week.

Financial proceeds from sales are given to different charities, but always organizations that are making a positive impact on society. Wang says she and Thompson choose which charities to donate to; Thompson leans toward family charities while Wang leans toward animal charities. Both particularly like to donate to small grassroots organization because a \$500 gift is such a great help to a struggling organization.

A large focus of the resale shop is meeting immediate need. When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit, Helping Hearts opened their facility so that those who were in need could take whatever they could use. A small non-profit in Michigan sent blankets and financial gifts so that Helping Hearts could assist those who had been displaced and others in need.

Wang insists that Helping Hearts wouldn't be the same without its volunteers.

“They have taken ownership of this mission, and we could not do without them,” Wang says.

In addition to being the co-founder of Helping Hearts, Wang is a print program manager for the notebook department at Hewlett Packard. She has been with Hewlett Packard/Compaq for 19 years.

“The resale shop is a manifestation of my desire to help animals, and that brings me a lot of joy,” Wang says.

Though the seed of a desire to help animals has blossomed into the resale shop, Wang realizes there is still work to be done.

“This award means that my best friend and I have turned our vision into a reality,” Wang says. “That’s a great feeling, but there is much work to do, and I look forward to this vision unfolding to do even greater good.”