

## Garden Pathways

2009 *"Woman with a Heart for Bakersfield"*

### Susie Small



Susie Small abundantly showers the loving and nurturing heart of a mother upon everyone she meets. "Big Momma," as she is affectionately known, has a heart of extravagant generosity. Susie's extravagant generosity is realized in the depth of her compassion, in the sharing of her time, and in the outpouring of her resources. Her liberality abounds equally to the stranger and to her closest friends, to the helpless and to the powerful.

Susie's far-reaching service and contributions extend both inside and outside the local community. The sassy, down-to-earth "Big Momma" expresses her warmth and genuine caring through boundless acts of kindness. Susie has turned the personal loss of her granddaughter, Lauren ("Angel Girl"), to cancer into focused determination to expand local medical care for children. As a fundraising champion for the Small Miracles Foundation, Susie secures much-needed resources to assist families who are undergoing the financial, emotional and physical strain of having a child with cancer. Susie's tenacious efforts have been instrumental in creating hundreds of "small miracles" – providing transportation to doctor's visits, food, and funding for hotel accommodations and utility bills. Susie's drive and determination to increase local medical treatment for children have contributed substantially to the expansion of the Bakersfield Memorial Hospital neo-natal intensive care unit and the future eight-bed pediatric intensive care unit (a one-of-its-kind in Bakersfield), as well as to the development of the West Tower. Her resolute vision and "we can" certitude throughout the four-year campaign enabled the West Tower capital campaign and advancement team to raise over five million dollars. "This was the place where my heart began to heal," Susie said. As part of her unflagging commitment to support families who face the challenges of cancer, Susie coordinated the Ken Small Relay for Life team for many years and continues to participate annually.

"Once you start, there is no stopping," says Susie of her unrelenting service to others. When a need arose for a math tutor at Beardsley School and to raise funds for the Alzheimer's Association of Kern County, Susie immediately volunteered. Upon the return of the troops of the USS Ronald Reagan from their first deployment to Iraq, Susie was on the forefront with Cooks of the Valley to provide a plentiful steak feast. Susie says with profound gratitude, "These soldiers sacrificed and laid down their lives to protect our freedom, and some of them had never eaten a steak before." She continues to engage frequently in the feeding of our military troops. On a daily basis, Susie's overflowing generosity to others reflects her passion to "make each day better and make it count."

Susie hails from the Sunflower State of Kansas. She and her husband of thirty-three years, Ken, founder of KS Industries, are the proud parents of Jason, Aimee, and Kevin and daughter-in-law, Tuesdy. Susie takes great delight in her grandsons, Kyle and Kenzer. Susie considers her greatest accomplishment and joy of her life to be her blended family.