

Houston ToolBank provides tools to transform community projects.

BY MELISSA ORSAK

With only five paid full-time staff members, Houston ToolBank saved charitable partners over \$3.1 million in retail tool expenses in 2024 alone. They lent over 61,041 tools to 399 nonprofit partners working on 2,219 community projects. Marly Maskill, the Executive Director of Houston ToolBank, stated that their “tool lending program provides nonprofit and tax-exempt entities with year-round access to an inventory of tools to support all aspects of mission-focused activities and operations.” Maskill continues, “Our vision is to uplift communities with tools for change, and we optimize resources for the nonprofit world by building capacity with tool and equipment lending, disaster preparedness/response, hands-on training, and more.” Borrowing tools for a nominal fee equates to substantial cost savings, allowing charities and philanthropists to allocate the saved funds to other needed aspects of their missions.

With an engineering background, Maskill was drawn to the ToolBank organization and its remarkable ability to enact significant change, much like a single tool can play a pivotal role in accomplishing great things. She shares, “When I first learned about the ToolBank, I thought it had the potential to be a small change in the nonprofit sector that does just that. While tool lending itself is a simple concept that may seem peripheral to larger issues impacting Greater Houston, our services amplify the impact of hundreds of member agencies annually. The ToolBank is a force multiplier by increasing capacity across nonprofit organizations across all mission types.”

“The Houston ToolBank maintains an inventory of more than 317 different types of tools and equipment in volumes large enough to equip thousands of volunteers at a time. In addition to our central warehouse in downtown Houston, the



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ToolBank operates six Neighborhood Tool Hubs across Southeast Texas – located in Angleton, Beaumont, west Houston, Conroe, Galveston, and Richmond. Our Neighborhood Tool Hubs, along with our direct delivery service, ensures all of our partners have equal access to ToolBank resources, no matter where they are serving.”

One may wonder how the ToolBank thrives with few employees. Maskill shares, “We could not do what we do without a team of volunteers who support us across all aspects of our operations – from warehouse support to tool repair to our special events. We are always seeking volunteers who are interested in supporting the community through the ToolBank. As a nonprofit, we always welcome donations, as well, both in the form of funds and/or new or used tools that could be shared through our program.”

An example of one of the ToolBank's symbiotic partners is JustServe. Maskill said, “We collaborate with JustServe in many ways. The ToolBank provides resources for their events, JustServe provides volunteer support to the ToolBank, and as a part of the nonprofit sector in Houston, we’ve been fortunate to work alongside JustServe on city-wide volunteer and disaster response initiatives. JustServe is a true partner of the ToolBank in every sense of the word, and we’re so grateful to work alongside them in supporting the greater Houston area.”

Furthermore, SEARCH Homeless Services (partner since 2017) said, “Partnering with the ToolBank helps us ensure that our agency budget gets invested in the teachers and learning materials that make our pre-K education for kids impacted by homelessness possible while still allowing us to keep our campus environment beautiful and enriching. This year, we rented tools from the ToolBank to refill our pre-K sandboxes, refresh our sensory and butterfly gardens, and mulch our playground...Mulching the playground makes it a safer environment for students and helps SEARCH comply with safe fall zone regulations. Our gardens are beloved parts of campus and learning environments for children given our curriculum’s focus on environmental stewardship. Maskill shared that, “Since 2017, SEARCH Homeless Services has borrowed more than \$32,600 worth of tools in support of 71 such projects. We’re proud of the impact that \$32,600 has when reinvested in their education program, rather than if it were spent on tool purchases and rentals.”

The Houston ToolBank is eagerly moving forward to help its new student and young adult training program, Tool School, succeed. Maskill remarked, “Now, more than ever, access to post-secondary education and creating accessible pathways to employment is critical. Tool School is one of the ways that the Houston ToolBank can help bridge gaps with students readying themselves for life after high school and can provide life skills training to individuals with intellectual or



developmental disabilities (I/DD) in service of helping to develop independence and confidence. Combining the opportunity to develop these skills with information about careers, certifications, and programs associated with work in nonprofits and the trades provides Tool School participants a more comprehensive understanding of their education and employment options.”



The Houston ToolBank is a rapidly expanding organization with over 900 partners. They all work tirelessly to build a better tomorrow, one life and one project at a time. Whether you want to lend a hand or seek their support, reach out and allow them to be a tool to amplify the impact of your own philanthropic endeavors.



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The Houston ToolBank serves community-based organizations by providing tools, equipment, and expertise to empower their most ambitious goals.

Since opening our doors in late 2014, the ToolBank has consistently increased the nonprofit sector’s capacity to make a difference. When we share high-quality tools our members are able to do more for our community – whether through disaster response, home repair, days of service, or charitable events.



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