

Colleen's Contemplations – March 2009

One of our clients died in February. She was one of our shut-ins, so our relationship was mostly over the phone. If you know me at all, you know I'm not a phone person, so it was an effort to call, but I was always rewarded with her friendly attitude and gracious, thankful words. Whenever I sent her a card with a prayer for her, I always received a thank you call. She didn't take our role in her life for granted. I don't know a lot about her, but I do know that her brief relationship with WNC was a good one.

In the last couple of months our community had shown her a lot of love. She was one of the families adopted for Christmas. She told me it was a very special experience. She was a hard to fit size, but her "Santas" managed to find items that fit and looked great. Finding a coat that was warm enough and didn't get tangled in the parts of her walker was truly a blessing for her. She received one of the Christmas meals our community donated. She used it to host a gathering of her friends and family, a gathering she might not otherwise have been able to manage. We found her a nice table cloth and a few toys for the children to play with. As a former restaurant owner and longtime cook, it was a very special gift. I'm not sure I understood how important it was to her until I listened to her friends share about her at the memorial service. It was an odd feeling, knowing how much our community had played a part in her life, anonymously.

One of her biggest struggles was a bed that didn't aggravate her degenerating back problem. We anonymously share stories and concerns with our donors and they always come through. A brand new bed with new bedding was donated specifically for her. As the person who got to shop for her new bedding, I can tell you it touched me in a special way. I felt like a part of her life despite the infrequency and the phone lines between us. It was an all too short relationship we had, but in that short amount of time Waunakee blessed her with a lot of love and care. Her last months were pretty encouraging and positive. It's a blessing to be able to make such a difference in the lives of our clients, and it wouldn't be possible without the amazing generosity of the Waunakee community. I have a great job.

Did you know that March is traditionally the hardest month of the year for a number of our clients? The utility company has a no shut off policy during the very cold months, so some of our clients use that "grace period" to catch up on other bills and needs. It may not be the most fiscally responsible thing to do, but it happens all too frequently. I expect to be very busy in March, helping people to make their dollars stretch further by providing those few items we can. Diapers and toilet paper are not exotic needs. But by providing these things, there is more money for milk and bread.

If you do any sort of Lenten observation this year, can I make a suggestion? Pay attention to the basic needs of your own family. When you buy a package of toilet paper, buy two and donate one. Notice the cost of diapers and pick up a size 4 when you can. Buy extra of your favorite canned goods and donate them to the food pantry. Feel like your kids are growing way too fast? Shoes, socks, underwear, and jeans without holes are a concern for many of us, especially if there isn't any extra money. But mostly, pray. Pray for the sick children and the out of work parents, and the homeless among us. Pray that a difference is made in the lives of all those your donations allow us to help. Pray that during this season of sacrifice; we not only remember the great sacrifice made for us, but the small sacrifices we can make for "the least of these." And reach out more. While a memorial service is a wonderful time of remembrance, it feels better to be able to say you're welcome.

Colleen Woerner
WNC Vice President & Store Manager

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