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***The mission of Inspired Woman is to celebrate, encourage, empower, educate, and entertain women.***

## *Our Philosophy*

Our philosophy reflects our core beliefs and values. It reveals what we believe and value most about people and organizations, as well as the kind of organization we are and desire to be.

We believe every woman is created in God's image, with value and with purpose. We believe women should be celebrated and valued for their uniqueness, talent, and beauty. We believe women should be honored for the contributions they make to their families, careers, and communities.

We value the vast differences, backgrounds, and beliefs that make each woman special, and the possibility that these can unite us rather than divide us.

We aspire to breathe life into those who read and hear the stories we share.

## *Our Purpose*

Our purpose is to enrich the lives we touch, to share inspiring stories, and to educate our readers, as well as ourselves. Inspired Woman is a journey – we are inspired every day, and we grow and learn with each issue we produce. We feel called to use our talents and time to inspire others.

## *Our Objective*

Our objective is to provide a print magazine and an interactive website where women can go to read about other women doing great things, to find hope, inspiration, laughter, and maybe even a new recipe. We strive to enrich every life we touch through Inspired Woman.

***She is clothed with strength and dignity,  
and she laughs without fear of the future.***

***– Proverbs 31:25 NLT***





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for this is God's will for you in  
Christ Jesus."**

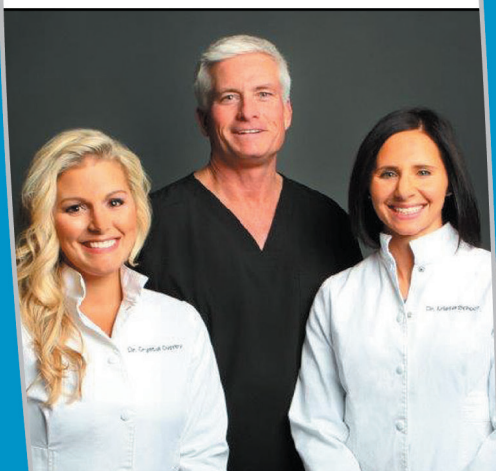
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# Editors' Notes



Wow.

That's all I can say. Working on this issue has left me speechless, and if you know me, you know that doesn't happen very often (I like to talk!). Every single person featured in this issue has the most amazing story to tell. I'm talking tears in your eyes, goosebumps, make you want to call your sister stories. Strong, beautiful women who have been touched by breast cancer. But it's not just women. We met some inspiring men too, whose lives have been forever changed by breast cancer, and have found their own ways to give back.

It makes me sad that so many people's lives are affected by such a terrible disease, but it gives me hope when I hear stories of women who have survived. And it warms my heart when I meet people who are helping others. Talk

about restoring my faith in humanity.

With each issue we put together, our mission statement is always in the back of our minds: to celebrate, encourage, empower, educate, and entertain women. I always say that if we can reach one woman, give one woman the words she needs to read, then we have succeeded. This month, that one woman is me. After years of avoiding the doctor, and of telling myself I'm too busy for a checkup, I'm scheduling an appointment. Not because I'm scared, or because I don't feel well, but because I've learned just how important those regular checkups really are.

I'd love to hear how this issue inspires you!

Jody



"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face." –Eleanor Roosevelt

Pink is so pretty. Cancer is so ugly. And who has hasn't been afraid of the word "cancer" at some time in their life? What woman hasn't given thought to the "what-ifs" of a breast cancer diagnosis? If not for ourselves, for someone we love? It can be scary. After all, we have lost friends and family to this horrible disease. And yet this month we "Go Pink" because it gives us hope.

Most issues of Inspired Woman magazine feature one cover girl. But breast cancer is something that touches so many lives in so many ways, that we have a collection of cover girls and stories for you—each with a "Family Tie." And in every story you will find women gaining strength, cour-

age, and confidence as they fight something ugly.

I am so grateful to the women and men who share their very personal stories with you. Our hope and theirs is that you will be moved to take action or share a story from this issue with someone who could benefit or be comforted; someone who may be facing this fear of breast cancer right now.

Pink is a beautiful color. Even when it reminds us of an ugly disease. May this issue remind you of hope.

Marci



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## KEYS TO HOPE

by Jody Kerzman | Photography: Photos by Jacy

Chris Koski is passionate about two things: helping others and making jewelry. That's why her latest project is such a perfect fit for her.

Chris has teamed up with the Ruth Meiers Hospitality House to make "Keys to Hope," necklaces and keychains made from old keys found in the building.

"Vivian Meiers contacted me about six months ago. She had a wonderful idea that we could make jewelry and wondered if I would be open to that," recalls Chris. "I said 'yes, yes, yes!' I couldn't wait to get started."

In August, Chris began creating. She hand stamped the word "hope" on more than 500 keys and then transformed those keys into necklaces and keychains. Those are now available for purchase throughout Bismarck and Mandan. All the proceeds go directly back to support Ruth Meiers.

"We tell people that by purchasing

one of Chris' pieces they are providing one night of shelter, three meals, and a hot shower for a someone in need. That resonates with a lot of folks," says Cathy Anhalt, Community Resource Officer at Ruth Meiers Hospitality House. "It isn't a money maker for us. It's an awareness piece. We want people to know what we do and who we help."

That has changed immensely since its founding. In 1987, the Ruth Meiers Hospitality House provided shelter services to seven homeless men. Now, Ruth Meiers provides shelter and affordable housing for men, women, and children. Nutrition services, assessments, medical care, chiropractic care, an emergency food pantry, daycare, and afterschool care are also offered. There is a men's shelter on 23rd street, and a Residential Program located on Boulevard Avenue in the former Baptist Home building. There are over 100



beds available there, along with 85 affordable housing units. In 2015, the Ruth Meiers Hospitality House provided 34,694 nights of temporary housing for people. They served 47,665 meals, and provided 20,218 pounds of food through their food pantry.

"We are still growing. And as we continue to grow, those services will continue to increase," says Jaci Hall, Executive Director. "We take a team approach to everything and all of our clients have caseworkers to help them get back on their feet. It really goes back to the analogy, *if you give someone a fish, they'll eat for a day. But if you teach them to fish, they'll eat forever.* We know it takes time. You can't go from zero to 60 overnight, but our ultimate goal is to help them all become self sufficient."

It is a mission that tugs at Chris' heartstrings. She spent her career working as a social worker in the Bismarck Public School district.

"I am retired now, but I'm still a social worker at heart," she says. "I live in Portland, Oregon now and I help out at the Portland Rescue Mission serving meals. I'm getting involved in anti-sex trafficking work as well. My heart is just right there, helping people. I want to help all God's people, no matter what their story is."

Because whatever their story, Chris believes everyone deserves the key to hope.

To learn more about the Ruth Meiers Hospitality House, visit their website at [ruthmeiers.org](http://ruthmeiers.org). *M*



(LEFT TO RIGHT)  
Jackie, Chris, and  
Kathy

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# AN ATTITUDE FOR GRATITUDE

## 6 Ways You Can Benefit From Giving Thanks

by Lisa Dingeman



As we step into the month that stakes claim to Thanksgiving, we find that our appreciation for others becomes more apparent, and our hearts open a little wider. The “Pay it Forward” concept isn’t so unfamiliar and the outpouring of love seems almost foreign, after all our world has gotten used to downplaying violence and corruption.

Imagine a life that didn’t consist of a honking horn behind you, pointing out that you’re not driving fast enough. Imagine never being on the receiving end of a backstabbing friend or co-worker. What if belittling and judgment didn’t exist? Imagine how that could change our outlook on life.

If we can go from negativity to positivity and from criticism to acceptance we can create wonderful things. A Berkeley study has shown that people who live their lives thinking and acting with gratitude have healthier and happier lives. Not only that, but the results are positively numerous!

### CHECK IT OUT:

- *A positive outlook on life.* A positive attitude makes getting through the work week a little less painful.
- *An inkling to be more active.* This

naturally brings me to my all time favorite movie quote: “Exercise gives you endorphins, endorphins make you happy, happy people just don’t shoot their husbands, they just don’t.” But on a serious note, people who are appreciative or feel appreciated have more energy to go on walks or use it doing something beneficial for their bodies.

- *A stronger relationship with others.* People gravitate to others who they figure to be happy with life. These people normally have a lot of loved ones and lifelong friends.

- *A life free of stress and worry.* Now who wouldn’t want to cash in on that concept? Because our bodies work on a cellular level, we can have a direct effect on the balance of our own hormones, which control how we think and react.

- *A plethora of health benefits.* Happiness (which stems from living an appreciative and purposeful life) decreases the risk of heart disease. What’s more, people who are happy have shown to develop stronger immune systems; as happiness comes and goes so does the ability to fight off a virus. In the end, you could be





increasing the length of your life.

- *Happiness in those around you.* To me, this is the most important benefit. Happiness emits pheromones which attract more happiness, simple as that. If you don't end up living the life of longevity at least you can say that you made people feel good when they were around you, and that my friends, is irreplaceable.

Long story short, it is much less time consuming and worrisome to just be happy and appreciate your life and the people in it. Thank everyone and

everything you can think of. Thank the mail man for hand-delivering your bills, thank the police officer for pulling you over, thank the previous owners of your house for flooding the basement—after all, you could very well not have a place to call home. *M*



*Lisa Dingeman is a devoted wife and the proud mother of two boys. She is a personal trainer in Bismarck and is working on doing her third fitness competition. Lisa has devoted her life to faith, family, and wellness.*



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# Look What She Did



## AMY HULLET

Amy Hullet of Bismarck has been selling homes for more than 11 years. In September she brought the house down at the North Dakota Association of Realtors (NDAR) 2016 Convention of the Dakotas. The Century 21 Landmark Realtor was named State Realtor of the Year, an honor bestowed on her by her peers.

"I am still very humbled by the award," Amy says. "I've watched other agents get the award in the past and was in awe. It's an amazing award."

Amy says she was one of seven finalists for the award which is based on overall success as a realtor and involvement in the Realtor Association.

"There are five or six categories we were scored on including sales production and involvement in the local, state, and national associations. We were also scored on what we do to give back to our local community and how we embrace the spirit of real estate in general."

Amy shares humbly why she believes she was selected for the award: "I hope I make an impression in the community and in our organization as someone who represents real estate the way that it should be; that you would want to work with me because you trust me."

Amy will represent the NDAR at this year's national convention, November 4-7.



## HALEY BEARSTAIL

Haley Bearstail has been dancing as long as she's been walking.

"I started as a traditional dancer, then a fancy dancer, and now I do jingle dancing," says Haley.

13-year-old Haley was crowned the United Tribes Technical College International Powwow Princess last March. Haley is the first-ever to hold this title.

"I get to travel all around and represent this powwow. It is such a great powwow and such a great honor to represent it," she says.

Haley has represented UTTC at powwows throughout North Dakota, Wisconsin, and New Mexico. As a princess, it's Haley's job to be an ambassador for the UTTC Powwow.

"It's her job to network and invite people to the celebration. Haley has gotten used to giving speeches, which is out of her comfort zone," says her mom, Joelle Bearstail. "She's also learning some valuable life skills."

Haley says the title brings great responsibility. She often dances for school kids and other groups, and talks in her native Arikara.

"It's fun to dance. I just love the feeling of having all the people watching me, and I love being able to share my culture with others," says Haley. "It makes me feel good."

Haley's reign as UTTC International Powwow Princess is up in March. She has already been asked to be the 2016-17 Arikara Celebration Princess, which is held in July in White Shield, North Dakota.

Haley is an eighth grader at Wachter Middle School in Bismarck.





## JESSICA JUST

The old coat or dress in the back of your closet may be worth more than you think. If you're not sure, ask Jessica Just. She's the owner of Vintage Closet. Jessica took her successful seven-year online business and opened a shop at 408 West Main Street in Mandan, where she buys and sells vintage clothing dating as far back as the 40s.

"The clothes come from people everywhere and they all have their stories," says Jessica. "Maybe it's an item from their mom or grandma or something they wore themselves and they are finally ready to part with it."

Jessica isn't sure how she developed her passion for vintage fashion. She grew up on a farm and went to school in Wishek, where she says she always considered herself a snappy dresser. And she's had an eye for styles from bygone eras since childhood.

"When I wake up in the morning this is probably the first thing I think about. I like the history of it, I like the design, and I like the style. I like everything about it."

Jessica has sold her vintage clothing to celebrities, TV shows, and designers, most notably, fashion designer Marc Jacobs.

"It's moments like those that keep you going and the average person too, who is thankful to find an item. I can imagine them out and about in it."

Follow Vintage Closet on Facebook.



## PATRICIA CAMISA

One in four women will experience a miscarriage or stillbirth.

That's a statistic Patricia Camisa knows all too well.

"I am the one," says Patricia.

On February 17, 2016, Patricia lost her baby. She was 19 weeks, five days into her pregnancy.

"My water broke when I was at work," she remembers. "My boss drove me to the hospital, but it was already too late. I had to deliver my baby who was already gone. That was horrific. I had to deliver a baby that I knew would never cry, that I could never take home."

Patricia and her husband had a funeral for their baby, Thomas David. And then, she says, the healing began. Patricia has been talking about her loss, healing a little each time she tells her story. And while talking is good therapy, she also hopes her story can raise awareness and help other moms who are also dealing with infant loss.

"I talk about it because so many women don't," Patricia explains. "People have reached out to me, and I've been able to help them. But there's still such a stigma about it. I want to change that. Why is it ok to say 'my grandma died' but it's not ok to say 'my baby died?'"

Patricia recently gathered several families who have lost babies for a photo shoot. Her goal was to give grieving families healing, and to bring them together to help each other.

"I want them to know they're not alone, and that there is hope."



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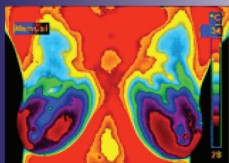


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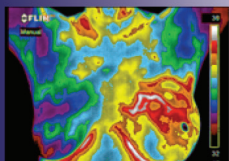
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a mammogram. This screening  
could save your life."*



---

# JOEL THE SHOELESS

---

by Patrick Atkinson | Submitted Photos

---



His name was Joel. I'll remember him for as long as I live.

Joel was a young beggar boy who carefully searched the garbage-strewn gutter outside my Central American home each day. When he found someone's tied-off kitchen bag trash, he picked it up as if it might be filled with diamonds. He peeked under every discarded box.

Joel must be hungry, I thought, and since everyone, I believe, has enough to give to a child as hungry as he, each day I shouted at Joel to come get food, but he just ignored my offers to help.

For nearly a year I didn't know where Joel slept or if he even had a family. One afternoon, though, we—plus the Guatemalan national police and a few people from the US embassy—entered a backstreet bar where we had been told children were sold.

The foreign tourists there tried to run, but we had taken that into account. The children who were rented out there to 'sex tourists' also tried to run, and we hadn't considered that outcome. Joel was one of the runners who caught my eye as he pushed past me as he ran. He paused just before he escaped.

For 37 years now I have worked to fight human trafficking; first in the Fargo area during the 1970s while attending college, then with street gangs and child prostitutes in the grimy underbelly of New York.

Seven years of war-zone rescue work

in Central America followed during the 1980s, and then a contract documenting human trafficking networks in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s.

Finally in 1991 I founded The GOD'S CHILD Project (GodsChild.org) as a parental act to care for war refugee youth I had earlier raised. Ten years later, I founded the 'Institute for Trafficked, Exploited & Missing Persons' (ITEMP.org); North Dakota's first non-governmental anti-human trafficking group and, for the next several years, also one of the largest in the United States.

And while over these years I have worked with tens of thousands of abandoned child and adult prostitutes, human trafficking victims, and war-crime victims, I have never met anyone quite like Joel.

Two days after we assisted with that child prostitution sting and the sex tourist arrests in Central America, a surprise visitor knocked at my door. It was Joel. He was covered with lice and smelling foul.

When I spoke to him, he held up his hand and a strange guttural sound came from his throat. Then it hit me—Joel was deaf and had never learned to speak.

Abandoned by his father at birth, Joel was born to an alcoholic mother who also worked as a prostitute. She had syphilis when Joel was born and that spread to Joel's ear canal which robbed him of his hearing.

Joel came to us with bad habits, lice,

fleas, and rotted teeth. He also came with a sharp mind, survival instincts, and keen emotions. Violence on TV usually brought forth an anguished cry while watching a mother kiss her TV son good night brought tears to his eyes.

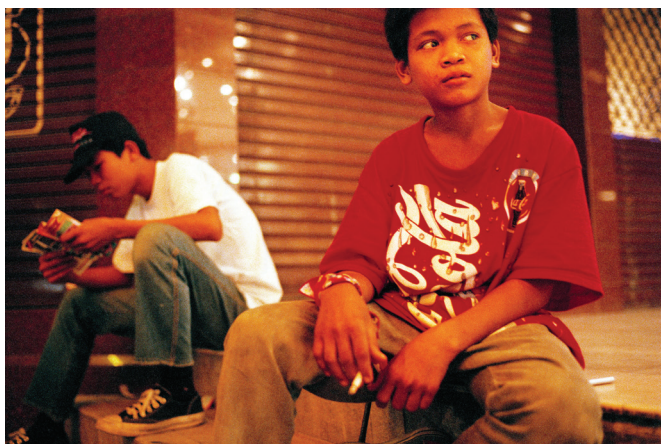
With time and patience, Joel pulled back from the brink, learned sign language, and graduated from school. He now works in a professional job, is married, and has a beautiful daughter.

In times of desperation and when life seems to be too much, we get tempted to throw in the towel and call it quits. It's at times like this that we need to go to our safe harbor; the safe spot in our mind where we are always grateful for at least one special thing which reminds us of hope.

Remembering Joel is one of my safe harbors. Now he smiles often and works hard. He loves to laugh and tries to talk every chance he gets. He visits his mother who abandoned him so many years ago, and stops into random churches when he is weary.

Joel knows that I know that he used to eat garbage to survive and that I saw him run from a children's brothel. He also knows that none of this makes any difference now. We are both just so glad that he made it.

For our daily successes we need to thank God each day. *M*



Bismarck-native Patrick Atkinson is the founder of The GOD'S CHILD Project international charity that cares for and educates 13,7000 people worldwide each day. He is considered one of the nation's foremost experts in human trafficking and street gang violence, and is a published author with books in worldwide distribution.



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# Brandi Jude

## FORCE FOR FREEDOM

by Marci Narum | Photography: Photos by Jacy

Don't tell Brandi Jude she can't do something. She will prove you wrong. What might surprise you is she is just as grateful for the people who don't believe in her as she is for those who do. Both have helped her realize that she is unstoppable as she builds her non-profit, Invisible Innocence.





**B**randi Jude is raising her two adorable little girls to be smart, strong, and confident women. And there is a reason.

Nine-year Dakota and six-year old Evalyn are the faces of innocence. They adore their mom. The girls squeal and giggle with delight as Brandi tickles them. The girls pick flowers for their mom, give her hugs, and kiss her cheek. Brandi and her girls love to bike the trails of Bismarck, and hike at the Indian Village Park overlooking the Missouri River. It is some of the most precious time for Brandi because when she's not hiking or biking with Dakota and Evalyn, she is blazing her own trail.

This 30-year old, single mother spends her evenings working as a server at Pirogue Grill in Bismarck, while her days are consumed by meetings, organizational development, and grant writing for the only non-profit of its kind in North Da-

kota. Brandi is the founder and executive director of Invisible Innocence, a transitional housing program for survivors of human trafficking.

"There are organizations that work with domestic violence and sexual assault victims that have started opening their doors but there is not an organization that is strictly for human-trafficked individuals," Brandi explains.

"The model structure I'm bringing to North Dakota is new here. There is a similar model outside the state that has proven to be very successful in its operations."

Brandi says the goal of Invisible Innocence is to empower survivors by giving them a temporary place to live and supportive services to prepare them for the next step: independence from the life of human trafficking. She says survivors will be sheltered for 30 to 45 days in a safe, un-



disclosed location.

"We want to get them off the street and make sure their pimp or their employer can't get a hold of them and then move them out to the organization that is going to help them dig in deeper and get out of the trafficked environment and lifestyle.

"Being a temporary location instead of permanent is what sets Invisible Innocence apart from other organizations," she says. "We want to be able to get them transitioned to an organization that has a program specifically developed for the type of human trafficking that person endured."

Invisible Innocence will shelter survivors of domestic servitude, forced labor, and sexual exploitation, including men, women, members of the LGBTQ community, and children.

"It's important that we aren't discriminating against a gender or a type of trafficking in North Dakota."

Brandi says as she develops the Invisible Innocence program she is already in contact with people from other organizations who work with victims of human trafficking and have a history and knowledge of slavery. She says they understand

the psychological development and trauma that occurs in trafficked individuals.

"So when we are developing the training program for our staff they will be more capable of building that rapport and relationships, and empowering those survivors."

Brandi says one of the most common questions she is asked is whether human trafficking is really an issue in North Dakota. She calls it slavery, and says it still exists everywhere, in ways one might not even imagine.

"Slavery has never ended. If you think about it, human trafficking is modern day slavery. It's just morphed into a different look. So there isn't one type of trafficker or one type of person being trafficked. The difference is the way people are being trafficked does look different."

She points to the internet as just one example of sexual exploitation.

"It's a huge resource for buying and selling humans and it's very easy for a predator because many social media pages that adolescents, teenagers, and kids use are where traffickers find their targets."

Victims of labor trafficking, Brandi admits, can be harder to identify.

"It can be someone working in a



(LEFT) Brandi  
with daughter,  
Dakota





"These people are invisible even though they are in plain sight and they're innocence is being taken away for greed and other people's benefit."



restaurant, hotel workers, or laborers on farms. We are a very rural state, so it can be challenging to find those workers. Because how do you address it? How do you approach someone that you think is being forced into labor?

"In restaurants or hotels, labor trafficking happens to people who work behind the scenes. The legal minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour for cooks and dishwashers. Employers can legally pay servers a lower wage, though, such as \$4.25 an hour. They might not be getting paid at all, or they might be getting paid but it's an unlivable wage. It might only be \$1.00 a day. In some cases the individual is in 'debt bondage,' owing the employer for bringing them to North Dakota for employment and a place to live. They get caught in a horrific cycle that seems inescapable."

Brandi says domestic servitude can

also be easily hidden.

"It happens within the home; the victim is not allowed to leave. Instead of living in an apartment somewhere, the individual is forced to live in a closet or a garage, and has the bare minimum for survival. It can be a nanny or a maid. Even with developmentally disabled individuals, the guardians, family members, or friends might take over someone's disability or social services benefits, and force the individual to work long hours with no time off."

These scenarios will likely be foreign and difficult to imagine for most people. Brandi has witnessed all of them. And although it hasn't happened to her personally, she believes having the passion to help survivors of human trafficking is reason enough to do what she is doing.

"I don't have some horror story to



(LEFT) Brandi with daughter, Evalyn

(RIGHT) Brandi with daughters, Dakota and Evalyn



“Our focus is empower, empower, empower.

Help them figure out what balance of mind, body, and soul is, and really help get them prepared to move on.”

—Brandi Jude

share with people, so that isn't my driving force. But I know this is a global issue. I've seen the struggle, the abuse, the greed, and the manipulation that comes with it. And just knowing that I'm someone with the stability, why not? It's just the right thing to do.

“I have witnessed different forms of human trafficking here in Bismarck since I was in high school, as well as when I was serving in the military overseas. In high school it happened to a friend and I didn't know how to help. Her boyfriend kept her in an apartment and sold her to businessmen who came to town for meetings. The only thing I could do was help pack her clothes and get out of there. I have carried a lot of guilt that I couldn't do more at the time.”

When Brandi returned home after serving overseas in the Army she went back to her high school and met with the school counselor.

“I wanted to know if there was anything in place to make students aware of human trafficking, but she told me the topic was too heavy to bring up to high school youth.

“Human trafficking is horrific. It's slavery. But something good can always come from something negative. And if you focus on being a voice for the invisible and help them regain their innocence, then you're doing something. That's where the name came from. These people are invisible even though they are in plain sight and their innocence is being taken away from greed, and other people's benefit.”

Brandi says people have said her idea for Invisible Innocence will fail; that this

can't be done in North Dakota. But that hasn't stopped. In fact, it has fanned the flame of her passion and made her more aware of the people who do believe in her dream. It made her believe more in herself too. Brandi applied for the organization's non-profit status on her own—camping out with her daughters for hours this summer in the kid's section of the Bismarck Public Library where she studied tax laws and non-profit legal requirements.

Brandi laughs, “The staff at the library knew us all by first name.”

Her hard work and sacrifice paid off. The organization received its 501(c) 3 status within 45 days of her application. Brandi is now writing grants to help fund the \$384,000 operating costs for Invisible Innocence. Depending on the funding she receives, she plans to open the shelter next summer. But she knows she has many more long days and nights of hard work ahead of her.

“It is sacrifice because I work at night. I have meetings all day and then I work until 11:30 at night. I get up and get the kids ready for school and do it all over again. But I wouldn't change anything because I'm doing what I want to do.

And if Brandi's passion isn't enough, there is that other reason. The girls she is raising to be smart, strong, and confident women.

“I'm a single mom and I've been a single mom most of my life. I think that's the best reason to challenge myself because I get to show them, our future generation, our future leaders what it's going to take. It's going to take sacrifice. But that sacrifice does pay off.” *W*

Brandi is a single mom but she does have help. Alan, who Brandi calls “the missing puzzle piece.” Visit [inspiredwomanonline.com](http://inspiredwomanonline.com) to hear Brandi share who he is to her.



# WOMEN & MONEY:

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With our members in the driver's seat, we offer guidance based on sound and timeless principles:

- **Spend less than you earn.** This is critical. No one can live beyond their means forever, and all bills—credit card, mortgage, home equity loans and others—eventually come due. Being wise with money means having the ability to be prudent with the resources you already earn.
- **Be wise with debt.** Debt isn't something to be avoided at all costs. Some debt can be very healthy and a way to broaden and strengthen your future—both inside and outside your financial picture. Mortgages, student loans and car loans can all be entered into and can be a part of a healthy financial strategy—they just need to be managed carefully and effectively.
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- **Have a short- and long-term plan.** College, retirement, emergency savings, a new car ... all of these are great goals for families and individuals to set for themselves. The key to reaching these goals is to do so in a way that maximizes current resources and helps minimize risk for an overall strategy. So when it comes to transitioning to drawing down money in retirement, the most important structure is to plan for the short term and ensure that it's working in conjunction with your long-term strategy for you and your family.
- **Give back.** Nothing lasts forever. At Thrivent Financial, we work with our members to ensure that generosity is instilled throughout a life-long financial strategy, not just when someone accumulates "enough" to give. We want to support our members' efforts to impact their families and communities through programs and opportunities to live generously.

Many people are looking for a silver bullet when it comes to finances. The most important part is to be true to yourself, your family and your goals. These five pillars can be a guide for you; however, it's ultimately up to you and what you want for your future.

Thrivent Financial is represented in the local area by a number of financial representatives. This column was prepared by Thrivent Financial for local distribution. Individuals interested in contacting a local Thrivent Financial representative can find more information at [Thrivent.com](http://Thrivent.com).

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# Inspired Woman Magazine

DEB SEMINARY: INSPIRED WOMAN'S SECOND EDITOR



Photography: Photos by Jacy

Deb Seminary wears a necklace that holds a gold anchor pendant suspended inside a flat, round, silver charm. Etched on the charm: 81° 50' W and 26° 19' N.

"It's the latitude and longitude of a place in Florida I've been to several times," Deb says. "I don't know if it's being so close to water, but that's where I feel anchored the most; where I feel closest to God. It's very peaceful and healing."

That anchored feeling isn't new to Deb, though. In fact, she says Inspired Woman magazine was a source of strength—a ministry for her. She was the magazine's second editor, overseeing it for eight years when she took over in 2007.

"God found his way into every single issue. I never went looking. It was after the second or third issue I said, 'Wow, He called me to do this.'"

"I think the survivor issues touched me the most. I knew many of those women but didn't know what they

had overcome. They were so brave to tell their stories. And while we will never know how many people they touched, the response those women got from friends and people they had never met was incredible. It was a way to let others know they weren't experiencing something alone and not to give up—others had survived and they could, too."

Deb says it's not hard to find an 'inspired woman.'

"Every woman is inspiring. We just may have not heard their story yet. I would be having a conversation with someone, and all of a sudden I would think, 'they need to be in the magazine!' That happened a lot over the years."

Deb is grateful for the people she met and worked with while she was editor. She worked most closely with Kitty Perry, who was the magazine's graphic designer from 2002 until 2015.

Kitty says, "I enjoyed being creative



“Every woman is inspiring.  
We just may have not heard their story yet.”  
—Deb Seminary



and I really enjoyed working with the editors. Kim Jondahl had a good creative eye, so she would let me know what she had in mind for the layout as she wrote the articles.

“When Deb came along, it was a completely different personality to work with, but I loved working with her. She knows what she likes and doesn’t like! There is no waffling. And I liked that. It sped things up.”

Deb laughs, “I think she appreciated the fact that I was honest with her.”

Kitty now lives in Camp Verde, Arizona and has seen the new version of Inspired Woman magazine online. She says Deb helped the magazine gain exposure through its online presence, social media, and community events.

During her time with the magazine, Deb launched, “Girl’s Night Out.” The vendor and fashion show fundraiser has raised more than \$10,000 for local non-profits. She also used the magazine to promote “Keep Bismarck Beautiful,” a city-wide cleanup day.

Deb plans to continue both events, and get involved with more local causes. She recently became an empty-nester and has a bit more time for volunteering.

“I should probably say ‘no’ to volunteering a little more often, but I am inspired to make Bismarck a better place to live.”

Maybe that’s because it’s also a place Deb Seminary feels anchored. *W*

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## FALLING INTO A NEW LIFE OF GRATITUDE

by Kylie Blanchard | Photography: Photos by Jacy

D'Arcie Malsam, owner of Stella's Décor and Gifts, says she is grateful for the life she leads and the opportunities being a shop owner in her home state have created.

"Not everyone gets to come to work every day with their mom, own their store, have the opportunity to meet people, and do something creative," she says. "It's really about enjoying the day for what it is and not always wanting more and wishing for more."

Rewind to last winter and D'Arcie says that was when she began to really see how much she had to be grateful for in her life. She, her husband, and her young son were living in northern Minnesota, and D'Arcie was working at a bank; however, she had also been in the jewelry and craft businesses for more than a decade with her mom, Barb.

"My mom was thinking of retiring and wanted to open a store in Bismarck," D'Arcie says. "I talked to my husband and he said, 'Let's do this, let's go for it.'"

The family began preparing for a move back to Bismarck and during a day of packing, D'Arcie slipped and fell outside while wearing her favorite, well-worn, pair of Converse® shoes.

"The next day I couldn't walk, my leg hurt, and I had a weird golf ball-size bulge in my leg. But it got better, so I decided I didn't need to see a doctor."

Three weeks passed and D'Arcie still wasn't feeling right. Born with a hole in

her heart, she knew the heart palpitations and chest pain she was now feeling were not normal, but she still didn't think it was a priority to get checked out.

"For whatever reason, I laid down that night and said a prayer, 'If you just let me wake up tomorrow, I promise I will go into the doctor.'"

She didn't want to wake her husband or young son to go to the hospital, so she instead she went to her son "to thank him for letting me be his mom and to say goodbye if I didn't wake up."

D'Arcie woke up, but still went to work the next day. It wasn't until after work that she went to the hospital. Initially, the many tests run on her heart showed no abnormalities.

"I thought I should tell the doctor about the lump in my leg from my fall and that is when we found out it was a blood clot. The pain I was feeling in my chest was it moving into my lungs."

After further testing, she found out she had two chromosomal mutations that cause her blood to clot. With the existing hole in her heart, she also learned clots can bypass her heart and move directly to her brain.

"This really made me wonder how many women die because we always say 'we will go in tomorrow.'"

D'Arcie got out of the hospital and a few days later she and her mom flew to Atlanta for a buying market. The store was becoming a reality.



"When I got back, my husband said I needed to quit my job and make the store a priority. We moved to Bismarck in February, and it was really seamless. I just kept thinking how could it be this easy?"

Stella's, which carries one-of-a-kind jewelry, vintage and new home décor, and unique gifts, opened March 1 and celebrated its grand opening on April 1. The store was named in honor of D'Arcie's grandmother, Stella, "a storyteller and a woman who was interested in everything," she notes.

D'Arcie says along with her move back home, her life also changed for the better in regard to her health.

"I never considered myself someone with heart disease, but I learned I do have heart disease. I also learned we, as women, need to make ourselves a priority. I have started to swim and I know I need to do something healthy for my body every day."

She encourages other women to trust their instincts when it comes to their health.

"We know our bodies better than anyone else, and we need to stop feeling guilty about taking time for ourselves."

Gratitude has also played a large role in her changed life and perspective.

"I never thought I would come back to North Dakota. I had given up on making it back home," D'Arcie says. "When I finally let go of what I expected in life, I became more grateful for the life I was given. You get more in life when you are grateful."

And, as for the shoes D'Arcie wore when she fell? She says she is even grateful for those.

"I thank God every day I wore those stupid shoes. I feel like it's hard to get rid of them, they are something that saved my life."

Stella's is located at 216 East Main Avenue. For more information, visit [stellasnd.com](http://stellasnd.com). *W*



*Kylie Blanchard is a local writer and a busy mom and wife who loves being active, but also enjoys sitting down to read a great book.*



# LOVE YOUR HEART

by Sandy Tschosik

*"One of the most beautiful things in the world is a woman's heart. It is fragile yet strong. Delicate yet resilient. When a woman gives you her heart she gives her most prized possession. If you love, nurture, cherish, and protect it, she'll give you the world" – Fawn Weaver.*

Do you love and cherish your heart? Please do because heart disease is not just a "man's" disease. According to the American Heart Association heart disease and stroke are a woman's number one and number three killer. Cardiovascular diseases will kill more women than the next four leading causes of death combined, including all forms of cancer. Therefore, it is important to know what puts you at risk.

**High blood pressure** can damage the heart and arteries over time increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. A normal blood pressure is a systolic (top number) less than 120 mmHg and a diastolic (bottom number) less than 80 mmHg.

**Cholesterol** can create plaque build-up on the walls of blood vessels, which can reduce blood flow or increase the risk of clots that can lead to heart attack and stroke. A blood test checks cholesterol levels. A total cholesterol level less than 200 mg/dL is desirable. An optimal LDL level is less than 100 mg/dL, however, talk to your healthcare provider about what your LDL should be as this depends on how many risk factors you have for heart disease. An HDL level between 40 to 59 mg/dL is normal, but greater than 60 mg/dL further lowers your risk for heart disease. A triglyceride level less than 150 mg/dL is considered normal.

**Being overweight.** A waist size over 35 inches in women and a body mass index (BMI) equal to or greater than 25 increases the risk of diabetes, high blood

pressure, high cholesterol, and cardiovascular disease.

**Smoking** is the leading preventable cause of premature death. Women who smoke increase their chances of developing heart disease, stroke, peripheral artery disease, cancer, and chronic lung diseases.

**Physical inactivity.** On average, American adults spend eight to nine hours a day sitting. When we spend the majority of our waking hours sitting and being inactive, the heart, lungs, and muscles do not work as hard and we burn fewer calories. The longer you sit, the less efficient the body's systems become. The metabolism of fats and glucose gets disrupted which causes cholesterol and blood sugar levels to rise. Researchers feel that this change in metabolism is linked to the increased risk of disease.

**Diabetes** is a disease that causes elevated blood sugar which can damage blood vessels. Therefore, if you have diabetes, it is important to control your blood sugar and have regular checkups with your healthcare provider.

## TIPS TO LEAD A HEALTHY HEART LIFESTYLE:

**Know your numbers.** Control your blood pressure, weight, BMI, waist circumference, cholesterol, and blood sugar.

**Manage your weight.** Even modest weight loss (five to 10 percent of body weight) can be beneficial in improving your numbers.

**Move.** Exercise helps you reach and maintain a healthy weight, lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, and helps to prevent or control diabetes. Try to get at least 30 minutes of exercise—such as walking—each day and take breaks from prolonged sitting.





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**Eat healthy.** Consume plenty of fruits and vegetables. Avoid foods high in cholesterol and saturated and trans-fats, which can increase cholesterol levels. Eat more whole grains which are full of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Choose lean sources of protein such as fish, lean cuts of beef, skinless chicken, and fat-free or low fat dairy products. Also limit your daily amounts of sodium and sugar.

#### **Quit smoking.**

**Stress less.** Unmanaged stress can contribute to high blood pressure and heart disease. Exercise, yoga, prayer, meditation, proper nutrition, and getting enough rest are important strategies to deal with stress. If you are having difficulty coping, talk to a health care provider or counselor.

**Limit alcohol.** Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure so it is important to consume in moderation—no more than one drink a day for women.

**Get your z's.** Getting enough sleep is important. Those who suffer from sleep apnea and insomnia are at increased risk for heart disease, arrhythmias, stroke, and hypertension, as well as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and high cholesterol. For a healthy heart try to get at least seven to nine hours of sleep per night.

Please don't take your heart for granted. *"Love, nurture, cherish, and protect it"* so that you can share your heart with the ones you love. *W*



*Sandy Tschosik was born and raised in Winnipeg. After earning her Bachelor of Nursing degree from the University of Manitoba, she decided that Canadian winters were too cold and moved "south" to start her nursing career in Bismarck. Sandy has a passion for motherhood, wellness, and hockey.*

## GO RED FOR WOMEN

Some women prefer to keep their age secret, but Sheila Long is grateful for turning 50 this year. She celebrated her big day September 23, and is still celebrating, because one year ago—August 1, 2015—Sheila suffered a heart attack. Doctors found a blockage and placed a stent in one of her main arteries.

On Friday, November 18 Sheila will be celebrating again at the second annual Go Red for Women (GRFW) Ladies Night Out. Sheila shared her story as a survivor at the 2015 event. Now she is a member of the GRFW committee and passionate about sharing her message.

"It's a mission of mine to reach others," Sheila says. "Pay attention to your bodies. First we want to prevent, but if you have some symptoms or have a health event, pay attention to it and get help."

Julie Jeske, chair of the GRFW committee says, "Last year was our inaugural event. We had a great turnout and we are building on last year's success. The American Heart Association's mission is to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke."

The Go Red for Women event will include a photo booth, silent auction, a heart-healthy meal, and a survivor's story.



### **Go Red for Women Ladies Night Out**

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**BECAUSE GUYS INSPIRE TOO!**

# OH MAN

by Marci Narum | Submitted Photo

## **DAMION DAVENPORT: HOME OF THE BRAVES GENERATES INTEREST ACROSS THE LAND OF THE FREE**

Damion Davenport is way beyond the age of getting stars on a homework assignment. He's 17, and a senior at Mandan High School.

But a project Damion completed for his Welding II class this fall has stars all over it—50 of them—and it has sparked a bit of fame for the aspiring welder. It's an all-steel American flag: two feet, two inches by four feet. It weighs 60 pounds and Damion says the first time he saw one like it—it made an impression.

"We took a class trip to Big Iron in Fargo for a welding convention," Damion says. "We toured the Lynnes Welding School while we were there and as I was leaving, I saw one similar to it so I thought I would make one of my own."

Damion says Welding II is a project-based class. His teacher is Luke Melmer.

"I encourage the students to make projects they like to work on. Something they can use, or something they know other people will want or use," says Melmer.

It seems Damion found the perfect project. Mandan High School posted a photo on Facebook of Damion holding his first completed steel flag. The post went viral and since then, Damion has been contacted by people from sea to shining sea requesting

he weld a flag for them too.

"I've gotten requests from California and Georgia because Mike Rowe put something on his page, Mike Rowe Works."

Mike Rowe of the TV series *Dirty Jobs* applauded Damion for his welding and entrepreneur skills. Damion is selling the flags for \$200. Despite the national attention he is getting, he is only filling orders for people in the local area. Damion is currently working to fill 40 orders for the flags, and has recruited some help from a classmate to finish them. He works on them any chance he gets, at home and during his two-hour Welding II class period.

Some of the people requesting the flags are military veterans, and that is meaningful to Damion. He says he is considering a career in welding, and perhaps even joining the Army, where he can use his welding skills.

"I've always looked up to the Army and serving our country. If I can use something like that to protect our country, I'd like to. I'm considering it, but I'm not certain."

Damion does know that after graduation from MHS next spring he will travel to Germany with his family's foreign exchange student, Julian. Damion is saving the money he earns from his steel flags for that trip. *M*





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# MODERN LIFE BEGINNINGS

by Betty Mills

Thanksgiving is theoretically a time for universal gratitude, a time to be consciously thankful for the goodness of our lives, which is easier for some of us than others. It is also hard to distinguish the line sometimes between gratitude and entitlement.

How do we assure our children that life is good and it's okay to invite the friend across the street for supper and also explain about the hungry kid somewhere who would be delighted to eat the spinach they're rejecting? That maybe the girl in the seat in front of them in school only has one pair of shoes. That not everyone has a car that reliably works.

In the long ago days of my childhood, Thanksgiving was the season when the crops were harvested, the cellar was stacked with food canned for the snowy months of winter, and the annual family celebration was in the planning. The meal was rotated among the families with big enough dining rooms, and the menu always included the turkeys the families had raised.

After the last piece of pie was dished out, the table was cleared for the card game that would decide who did the dishes. As a child I longed for the day I would be declared eligible to get in the game because doing the dishes sounded as much fun as playing the game. I also thought that everyone probably spent Thanksgiving as we did—good food, good games, happy families.

Disillusionment took awhile. Hard to forget the look of horror on my young husband's face the first time it was my turn to host their family celebration when I explained about the compulsory card game with dishwashing as the prize. There was no longer a game, but the dishes got washed. Then there was the

year at the request of a new son-in-law that I made a fresh oyster casserole from scratch—no easy feat in land bound North Dakota—and it failed his taste test.

Sometimes we were down to that so-called nuclear family plus a set of grandparents when one small turkey would do. And then we were nearly childless, college and marriage having broken up that old celebration of ours.

Growing up I had a dozen cousins who lived within reach of the family celebration. My children's cousins reside from the east coast to the west coast, hardly the agenda for a one day gathering. And nobody raises turkeys.

The theme song for modern life is probably "Life She Is A-Changing" but that does not necessarily mean we are no longer grateful for life's blessings. We just sometimes need to make a new list.

For example, depositing the dirty dishes in a dishwasher is a lot more fun than cleaning the mashed potato kettle in a kitchen with no running water, my chore the first time I was admitted to the family game --and lost.

If you've ever been assigned to catch the celebratory turkey, you'll understand that lugging an already de-feathered turkey with innards removed from the local store is really an improvement over the good old days. And punching up the thermostat beats shoveling coal into the downstairs furnace any time of the day or night.

I have attended all of my grandchildren's college graduation ceremonies whereas my grandparents were dead before my parents even met of causes no longer fatal or even common. Does make a reception room wait in the doctor's office bearable, and upon reflection, a matter for gratitude.



Perhaps there are two aspects to gratitude in this modern world where so much has changed from the Norman Rockwell days. The first is to count our present blessings—even a short list is a good start. The second is to add to the sum of someone else's list, remembering that the blessings in this world are not equally distributed.

The first Thanksgiving held in this country is changeably mythological by now which means you can't really ruin

Thanksgiving by serving oysters, and inviting that lost soul from the office is in keeping. The real trick is to remember the reason for this season.

Happy Thanksgiving whatever you eat. *TM*



*Betty Mills was a weekly political columnist for the Bismarck Tribune for 25 years. She grew up on a farm near Glen Ullin, where she learned to drive tractor and hunt rattlesnakes. At 90, she has been a mentor to an untold number of people.*

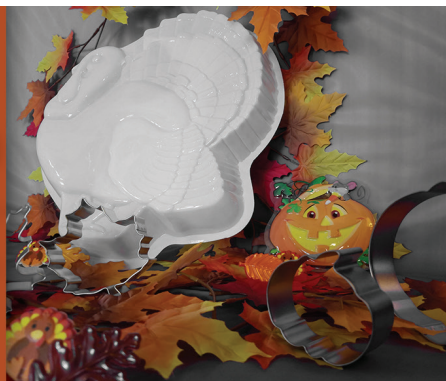
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## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

by Jennifer Joyce

Photography: Photos by Jacy

Between the three of us, we left the United States without 10 children; more accurately, we left our 10 children in the care of other people. We left our positions as mothers to fulfill our duties as service members in the North Dakota National Guard, and in our absence, our spouses and extended family picked up the slack.

Captain Jacy Voglewede, Master Sergeant Kayla Skelton, and I departed Bismarck August 12 for a multinational engagement in Africa through the North Dakota National Guard's State Partnership Program. We ventured to Ghana, Togo, and Benin to visit with military personnel about the issues they face in regards to gender equality and the struggles they encounter with the integration of women into their respective militaries.

Before our engagement, we prepared for the topics we thought we might encounter. Each time we discussed our upcoming endeavor, we ended our conversations with the same themes: as mothers, we feel guilty for leaving our families; but as full-time service members, we want to excel in our

roles and exceed standards. We didn't know exactly what to expect during our week long trip to Africa, but we felt ready. We were eager to learn and eager to help.

After our first engagement in Ghana, we learned that there was a parallel in our struggles as females in the military: our primary concerns are not sexual harassment or workplace discrimination as one might think. Rather, our shared concern is how to balance our careers in the military with our responsibilities as wives and mothers.

We were a bit shocked. We felt as though we had traveled across the world to find out that female service members in a developing country feel the same way we do! We weren't expecting that kind of feedback—after all, we traveled to our partnership countries to talk business.

We took the candid feedback to heart and kept it in mind as we continued our engagements in Togo and Benin, where we gained even more insight. We took note of how our military structure differs and how our militaries vary in levels of progression in regard







to gender equality and integration—in some respects, their militaries are even more progressive than ours. The overarching theme that resonated throughout each country, though, was the same one that the three of us North Dakotans had when we left home: as women, and especially as mothers, it is difficult to prioritize the family and career aspects of our lives.

Ma'am. Sergeant. Mrs. So-and-so. Jacy. Kayla. Jenn. Mom. We are called and recognized by these names. Each is a title associated with a role in our lives, accompanied by a particular set of duties. How do we find the balance? How do we manage it all by ourselves?

Here's the truth: we don't. We don't do it by ourselves. Just like our counterparts in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, we rely heavily on others to help us along the way. Jacy, Kayla, and I are fortunate to have family to help us with extended childcare. We have daycares, babysitters, and part-time nannies. We even periodically hire housekeepers to help get us back on track when we take a hiatus from housework.

Sometimes we feel guilty because

we feel like our families come second to our careers, especially for Kayla and me. We are both in dual-military marriages. That means double the time apart or, at times, it means that the kids have to go without both parents for a while. It isn't easy. Friends and family members who don't understand our military obligation have viewed us as "selfish." However, the commitment we give to the military multiplies tenfold when we're home with our families.

Like the mothers we met in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, "Mom" is our most cherished title. It's the reason we work so diligently to advance in our careers. It's the reason we are committed to a career that aims to defend and improve our children's way of life. Most significantly, it's the reason we seek outside support to provide them with as much stability as possible. We don't do it alone. It takes a village. *W*



*Jennifer is a full-time Soldier in the N.D. National Guard. She is a busy mother of twin toddlers and a stepmother of three. She resides in Mandan with her husband, Patrick, and their children. She enjoys any opportunity to learn something new.*



# The Evolution of the “CHURCH LADY”

by Paula Redmann | Photography: Photos by Jacy

The number of hours and minutes in a day are defined, yet indications are that Americans are busier than ever, and will do their blue ribbon best to pack more and more into each day. We try to bulge the borders of time. We eat while we walk. We listen to music while we read. We talk on the phone while in line at the grocery store. Take this warp speed lifestyle blur, and toss in children's activities, school events, errands, club projects, service organizations, special events, and community need. Turn every corner and you'll hear a loud cry for volunteers.

Every club, activity, school, and non-profit organization needs helpers to lighten the load. The same goes for churches. Congregations, small and large, need volunteers to complete tasks and carry forth both the daily needs, and the overall vision of the church.

There was a time when little was asked of church women, except to care for the congregation's children. For decades, “church ladies” served in the nursery, taught in the classroom, or prepared

and served food at funerals. There was always a supply to meet the demand.

As women's roles changed in society, women's volunteer roles changed in the church.

“Churches adjusted to the reality that women were not available during the day,” explains Jenny Hallenbeck Orr, Senior Pastor of McCabe United Methodist Church in Bismarck. “More women started working outside of the home. There was a shift away from daytime availability to evening ability. And even then, women's lives are so busy, with so many obligations. Women are pulled in many directions, so that means we're abundantly grateful for each and every volunteer who raises their hand to help us continue the mission of the church.”

Hallenbeck Orr says the transition has been interesting to observe.

“Even a crew of ushers used to be all men. Now you see women in that role. That change came almost at the same time as women entered the pastoral field. I think people thought, ‘If women can be in the pulpit, they can pass the plate.’

“There are many skilled and gifted women leaders. They can lead in the classroom, or they can lead on councils or leadership teams,” says Hallenbeck Orr. “Seeing strong women as volunteers and leaders in the church is huge. I had strong

(BELOW) Jenny Hallenbeck Orr, Senior Pastor of McCabe United Methodist Church







(ABOVE) Pam Power, Associate Pastor of Congregational Life and Pastoral Care at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

role models growing up who helped pave the way. We are called to do work at all levels of ministry. It all matters."

These volunteer roles provide opportunities for women to gain new skills through their volunteerism, or perhaps hone skills they already had. For many women, the church provides volunteer opportunities that provide mental well-being, a place to belong and connect, a chance for companionship, and a bowl of soup, especially to women who might otherwise be isolated in their homes.

Pam Power, Associate Pastor of Congregational Life and Pastoral Care at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Bismarck, has observed women volunteers in the church and looked at why they do what they do.

"It is joyful. That's what it is—joyful. They find joy in helping and serving. For many, volunteering is a form of worship.

"We need volunteers for anything and everything," says Power. "Whether it's teaching or serving at funerals, being musicians, readers, helping with communion, or being a part of our knitter's group. It is how volunteers live out their faith. Volunteering means fellowship, building community, and being together."

The next societal shift in the traditional "church lady" role, says Power, is avoid-

ance of long-term commitments. For years, the work of the church was done through a committee structure, and the committee would meet. And meet. And meet some more. Volunteers would find themselves frustrated at the abundance of meetings and often, the lack of action. Now, volunteers are looking for shorter terms and tangible results.

Power says, "Someone might not be able to teach for six months, or commit to being on council for two years, but they are very willing to say, 'Give me a project and I'll do it.'"

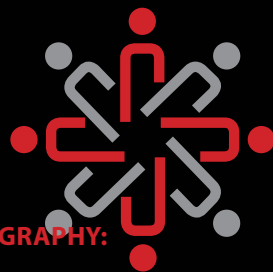
Power notes that getting volunteers involved and connected isn't a matter of asking them what they want to do. Rather, it's asking them what they feel called to do.

"We want to match your gifts and strengths with the needs of the church. Once you've identified your gifts, you can decide how you are being called to use them in the church and outside of it, as well. We can help make those connections of where your heart is being tugged to go in order to live in joy and gratitude," says Power. *W*



Paula Redmann is the Community Relations Manager for Bismarck Parks and Recreation District. She likes to run, walk, play, sing, putter in her yard, laugh with family and friends, and count her blessings. She married her high school sweetheart, Tom. They have two grown sons, Alex and Max.

# COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTOR



CORPUS CHRISTI EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY | PHOTOGRAPHY:  
PHOTOS BY JACY

## GIVE US A LITTLE HISTORY ABOUT THE CORPUS CHRISTI EMERGENCY FOOD PANTRY

Over 30 years ago, the parishioners of Corpus Christi, in thanksgiving for the many blessings they had received in their life, started the Corpus Christi Emergency Food Pantry. They have been supporting this ministry to our community ever since and continue to contribute to the pantry through monetary donations or nonperishable food items. Corpus Christi's food pantry is a small community pantry whose goal is simply to reach out to others in an effort to share some of what we have received. Our goal is to provide at least one hearty meal each day for a week for families that come to us for assistance. We also provide specialty baskets around the holidays, we also provide specialty baskets complete with all of the trimmings.

## HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT FROM OTHER FOOD PANTRIES?

At Corpus Christi, all are welcome,

and this vision extends to the work that we do in our food pantry. Our mission is not to provide weekly assistance to families, as there are many wonderful organizations in our community that are much better equipped to provide a full range of assistance to help families get back on their feet and thrive. We can, however, be a place people can turn to when they are at a loss as to how they will put food on the table that day. We can be a place that people can come to in times of emergency to find support, encouragement, and hope.

## HOW CAN PEOPLE CONTACT YOU FOR HELP?

We take calls from people requesting assistance every Monday and Thursday morning. There are no qualifications that need to be met to receive a food basket. All we need is some basic identifying information such as name, address, and phone number. We also ask for the names and ages of the people to be fed so we can tailor the boxes that we pre-





pare to the needs and desires of the family members.

### HOW CAN PEOPLE DONATE?

Our food pantry has always been completely funded through the generous monetary donations of our parish members as well as through their donations of nonperishable items. In addition, the church organizes periodic Food Pantry Sundays as well as special drives like our Thanksgiving Food Drive and Lenten Almsgiving Drive; however, the need for assistance seems to have grown exponentially over the last few years. This is why we are so grateful for the support that we have received through outside donations from a variety of individuals and organizations that have offered to assist us in providing this important ministry to people in our community.

### WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS RIGHT NOW IF SOMEONE WOULD LIKE TO DONATE?

If anyone wishes to donate to our food pantry, they can bring their non-perishable items to the upper gathering space of the church and place them in our wheelbarrow any time. Monetary donations can be dropped off at the church office or mailed with a note specifying the funds be used for the work of the food pantry. Some of the staple items that are always needed include cereal, peanut butter, pancake mix and syrup, pasta and sauce, rice, soups, and canned fruits and vegetables. *M*



# Josiah's Fire



Autism stole  
his words,  
God gave him  
a voice

TAHNI CULLEN  
with Cheryl Ricker

Make all the plans you want, but sometimes, life just doesn't go the way we expect it will. No one knows that better than Tahni Cullen.

After graduating from Timber Lake, South Dakota high school Tahni attended college at the University of Mary. She met her husband Joe there, and after college the couple moved to the Twin Cities to start their careers

and family.

In October 2005, the couple welcomed their first son, a healthy, happy baby boy they named Josiah. Life was good. But when Josiah was 22 months old, something changed.

"Josiah experienced a dramatic shift, lost eye contact, words, and play skills, and was ultimately diagnosed with autism," recalls Tahni. "The boy my husband and I once knew looked like someone had switched off his light."

Then, five years later, something miraculous happened.

"While reading to him from the children's Bible about how Jesus healed the blind man, I waited for him to spell the word 'heal' on big alphabetical buttons of his iPad," remembers Tahni. "Instead he typed something different, and my mouth dropped open."

Josiah had typed, "God is a good gift giver."

Josiah quickly moved to typing profound paragraphs about God, science, history, business, music, strangers, and heaven. Not only did his parents start getting to know their son's everyday thoughts, but he has revealed countless heavenly wisdom, angelic encounters, and told stories of family members in heaven—all self-initiated, and through painstakingly pointing, one letter at a time, typed communication.

Josiah's new ability to communicate changed the family's life again. Tahni details it all in her new book, *Josiah's Fire: Autism Stole His Words, God Gave Him a Voice*. Tahni co-authored the book with Cheryl Ricker, a Minnesota-based blogger and author. Their book became an autobiographical novel-type story, and it is a true story that is capturing the attention of people across the country. Tahni has been on national radio and television shows, including Fox and Friends, talking about her book and about her son Josiah, opening hearts and minds about autism and about God.

"I don't have desire to be famous,"





Tahni's book is available on Amazon and at Barnes and Noble. Learn more about Tahni, her book, and Josiah at [josiahsfire.com](http://josiahsfire.com). You can also follow them on Facebook at [facebook.com/JosiahsFire/](https://facebook.com/JosiahsFire/).

says Tahni. "My walk is to be obedient to God. I have to trust in him, however that plays out."

She does, however, have a desire to educate others about autism.

"Josiah was diagnosed in 2008. People didn't understand autism as much then. At that time, autism affected 1 in 150. Today, it affects an estimated 1 in 50 children, and is the fastest growing developmental disorder in the U.S. Despite our aggressive efforts to help him in every way possible, Josiah landed on the severe end of spectrum, as one of the 40 percent of children with autism who are nonverbal."

Tahni's efforts to educate started long before she had the idea to write a book. When Josiah was first diagnosed with autism, Tahni blogged through the ups and downs of their early journey, and she and her husband, Joe, produced an award-winning documentary called "Surprised By Autism."

"We want people to know that no matter how difficult the diagnosis seems, there's always hope with God," said Cullen. "We could have never

imagined that we would 'hear' words from our nonverbal son. God fills the gap where we can't."

Josiah has been involved in the telling of his story from the very beginning. At his suggestion, Tahni started a Facebook page, called Josiah's Fire.

"That was his idea," she says.

Despite all the good that has happened to the Cullen family, Tahni is quick to point out there are still very real struggles daily. But she is hopeful, for her son and for others like him.

"It gives me hope," Tahni explains. "My continued prayer every day is that the limitations of autism are off of my son. I dream for him and I want him to have dreams for himself, not be stifled by that autism label. That label should not be the final answer."

Since her book was published in September, Tahni says a lot more has happened in the family's life, enough for a second book. She already has the title picked out: *Heaven Unsilenced*.

Meantime, Tahni is thankful for the technology and learning method that has given her son a voice. *W*



**For even more on the stories in this issue—including photo galleries of Brandi Jude, Stella's, Ruth Meiers, Corpus Christi Food Pantry, Jenny Hallenbeck Orr, and Pam Power—visit our website:**  
[inspiredwomanonline.com](http://inspiredwomanonline.com)



## **COMING IN DECEMBER:**

"Giving Thanks"

Here are a few stories we are already working on for the November issue:

Home is where your story begins. You'll meet a young woman helping give survivors of human trafficking a new place to start their story.

We told you just a little bit of the Cullen's family story in this issue. Learn more about how Josiah's words are inspiring people around the world.

Church ladies. Do we even know everything they do?  
We'll be so thankful to find out.

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