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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 believed she could,
so she did."**



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"When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."

Matthew 2:10



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MERGING MOTHERHOOD AND WORK:

Supporting Breastfeeding Makes Good Business Sense

Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health would like to spotlight these local employers who are designated as an Infant-Friendly Worksites:

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Public Health

Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health

For more information on breastfeeding in the workplace, please contact

Katie Johnke, RD, LRD, CLC, kjohnke@bismarcknd.gov, 701-355-1555

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Editors' Notes



"Joy is what happens to us when we allow ourselves to recognize how good things really are."—Marianne Williamson

I love that quote because I can completely relate. So many times I catch myself feeling sorry for myself—I work all day, keep up on the laundry, drive the kids all over town, attend all their events, cook the meals, do the shopping. Poor me, right? Not at all! How lucky am I to have a family to take care of? Soon the kids will be grown and gone, the house will be quiet, evenings will be free, and my husband and I will be lonely and bored. I have learned to find joy in all the chores that could so easily be overwhelming. Things really are good!

Things are especially good this time of year. I love Christmas. Shopping for gifts, baking and giving away holiday goodies, sending Christmas cards—all those traditions bring me great joy. And, this magazine brings me joy. I can't explain how much joy I get working with my best friend, sharing inspiring stories, and learning new things every day.

I'm excited about every story in this issue. I am grateful to all the amazing women who contributed stories this month. It's great to have such talented people willing to share their gifts. I had fun working on the cover story. Kat Perkins, Gwen Sebastian, and Tigirlily are the definition of joy; they are kind, talented, down-to-earth, strong women.

May you find joy this Christmas season!

Jody



"There is no joy in life like the joy of sharing."—Billy Graham

Some Christmas traditions are worth letting go of. In my family we ended the tradition of exchanging gifts among the adults nearly 20 years ago. We have a "white elephant" gift party instead and we pool the money we would have spent on a gift exchange. That money is shared where it is needed in the community. I can't speak for the others, but I feel a great sense of joy in sharing. And that "white elephant" gift party is a hoot! I was the "lucky" recipient of a commercial size can of sauerkraut one Christmas. Ho-ho-ho!

This month's issue has some beautiful examples of people sharing and finding joy in it. I was so touched by the radiant joy of Ann Leingang and Monica Schmidt, our "Living Treasures." Be sure to read how they are spreading joy after finding a new purpose in their lives (page 28). I was also inspired by the example of Sister Barbara Weber, the focus of this month's "Women of Generosity" piece. Wait until you read about her amazing and insurmountable blood and platelet donations to United Blood Services (page 27).

I believe these stories resonate with me because giving to others gives me great joy. When Jody and I took over this magazine, we made it a priority to distribute it farther and wider than it had ever been shared before. Each month we load up our vehicles with boxes of magazines and away we go! It does feel a little like Christmas each month, sharing the new magazine with our readers. I am greeted with smiles, surprise, and gratitude by the recipients.

It's a new tradition that gives me great joy.

I wish you and yours a very blessed and Merry Christmas! See you in 2017!

Marci

DID YOU KNOW?

THE HISTORY BEHIND YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

by Beth Anderson

As the holidays near, do you ever find yourself transported back to childhood? All it takes is the scent of a favorite dish, the notes of a particular carol, a scene from *"It's a Wonderful Life,"* or a precious ornament in your hand. Suddenly, you are back in your parents' living room in slippers staring at a tree covered in handmade decorations and tinsel, sitting beside Grandma watching a flame flicker as she croons *"Silent Night"* by candlelight, or rearranging the figurines of Mom's Nativity set for the hundredth time.

Why is it that the traditions and rituals of our past stay with us? Mary Antin wrote, "It's not that I belong to the past, but that the past belongs to me." The routine of doing something over and over again instills in us a sense of security and continuity. Traditions also

help communicate beliefs and values from generation to generation. So, the dependability of holiday traditions provides us a sense of belonging and rootedness. They foster connection and deepen relationship.

Holiday traditions are usually the source of nostalgia and deep meaning, but for some, memories associated with the holidays can be painful. Establishing new traditions, however, can be a healing process. Starting a new ritual that brings joy can create new memories that inject a sense of anticipation, even hopefulness, into what might be a difficult season.

Since memories built through holiday traditions can be a powerful gift to those we love, we thought it might be fun to explore the beginnings of a few common Christmas traditions.

CANDLES

Have you noticed candles flickering in front windows of homes at Christmastime and wondered what they symbolize? In the late 17th century, British rule in Ireland forbid practicing of the Catholic faith and ordered all Catholic clergy to leave the country. Since gathering openly for Mass was impossible, faithful Irish Catholics developed another way to signal to any local priest that he was welcome to come offer the sacraments and find safety in their home. Doors were left unlocked. Sometimes a single candle would appear in several windows. Or three candles would be placed in one window, representing Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. When asked about the candles, homeowners explained them away as a sign to the Holy family wandering on Christmas Eve that they were welcome in the home and the hearts of all who resided there. The lit candle in the window continues today signaling the awaited homecoming of a loved one or as a general invitation of hospitality promising warmth and welcome on a dark winter night.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTS

The centerpiece of many a home this time of year is the Christmas tree bedecked with lights and ornaments. Throughout time and cultures, the evergreen has symbolized life in the midst of winter. The tradition of the Christmas tree comes from Germany. According to one legend, late one winter night the 16th century Protestant reformer Martin Luther was strolling home ruminating on a sermon when he gazed heavenward. As he looked up, he was struck by the beautiful sight of the stars sparkling through the ever-green boughs. Awe-inspired, he cut down a fir tree, carried it home, set it up inside, and wired candles to the branches to recreate the beauty of God's creation for his family.

NATIVITY SCENE

A frequent sight this time of year is the Nativity scene. Whether a children's Christmas pageant, an outdoor manger scene, or a Nativity set with figurines gracing the mantle of the home, the Nativity scene depicts the story of Jesus' birth in a stable in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. Nativities have been part of the Christmas season for almost 800 years and are found the world over. The first is credited to St. Francis of Assisi. In 1223, Francis received the Pope's permission to set up a manger scene with live animals in a cave near the Italian village of Greccio. Villagers came to view the scene while Francis preached about the birth of Jesus. And thus began a new tradition.

We hope that this holiday season you find a tradition that brings you joy. Whether you continue a holiday tradition that has been around for centuries, or start a brand new one, may you find one that fosters a sense of belonging, reaffirms what is most important, helps you look forward to the holidays, and

builds memories that make your heart smile for years to come. *M*



Beth Anderson is a diaconal minister in the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America). The joys in her life include her husband Dallas and their two beautiful girls. Beth loves cooking and getting lost in a good novel. You'll find her cross country skiing during the winter.



THE JOY OF THE HANDWRITTEN NOTE

by Pam Vukelic

In 1931 Marjorie Rombauer wrote "The Joy of Cooking," not because she was a good cook but because she needed the money. Since then there have been many iterations on "The Joy of..." theme. I'm adding my own—"The Joy of the Handwritten Note."

My goal is to encourage you to resist the urge to send an email message, tweet, or text when a handwritten note would be a better choice. The electronic methods are easy and quick, but they lack the impact of a note delivered directly to your mailbox. When you take the time to put pen to paper, to thoughtfully choose your words and share your personal sentiments, the recipient of your note is going to be so much more deeply touched than if you dash off a quick message on your phone or laptop. It is so much less a conscious action than if you write. Your note is likely to be read and reread. To be savored. Perhaps it'll be posted on the refrigerator and maybe used for a time as a bookmark, with each glance at it a memory of the pleasantries it pro-

vided.

In her book "The Art of the Handwritten Note," Margaret Shepherd suggests there are three reasons to write: obligations, occasions, and opportunities.

Obligations. If you've received a gift (e.g., wedding, graduation, shower) the giver deserves a thank you note. Mention what the gift was and explain how meaningful it is to you. Following up after a job interview with a thank you note may set you apart from other applicants. I'm not sure we have done enough to impress upon our young people what the value is of follow-up with a thank you note. It is an obligation. When sending a note of condolence following a death be sure to recall a memory or make another personal heartfelt comment.

Occasions. Anniversaries, birthdays, births, job promotions, and graduations are easy to notice. What is more meaningful – a short text message that says simply "Happy Birthday" or writing a note that explains why you

value your relationship with the honoree? Share your joy of grandparenting with a new grandparent and emphasize a quality in your friend that will make a terrific grandparent. Comment on a particular quality you recognize in a co-worker that contributed to her advancement.

Opportunities. These are moments you seek out. Make it a habit to notice a reason to send a note. Maybe you read about an accomplishment that was noted in the newspaper. Perhaps you noticed a neighbor's seasonal decorations made a beautiful statement on your street. You might have observed a child's awesome behavior, on which you can compliment the child and the parent. Note the anniversary of the death of a loved one to remind your family member that others feel his loss.

Prepare a bin, box, or basket to hold a stash of note cards, stamps, and a favorite writing tool. Keep it handy—maybe on your desk in the kitchen or next to your recliner. That way you can write your note when the thought occurs to you.

Stock up on generic note cards or get a bit crafty and make some of your own and you'll have no need to run to the store to pick up a card for a particular event or occasion. I've often found a beautiful box of notecards on a clearance table, proof of the fact that not enough people buy and send notes. Your handwritten note, with words you have chosen yourself, will more than make up for a canned verse on a purchased card.

The joy, though, is for you, the sender, as much as for the receiver. When you pause to focus on the positive in your note, you are giving yourself a better day. It is a moment of mindfulness. It is reminiscent of a gratitude journal many people keep to remind themselves of the good things going on in their lives. Make it a goal to send a note a week or even a note a day. The holiday season presents so many opportunities, not to mention obligations and occasions to note. You and your recipients will be rewarded with joy. *M*



Pam Vukelic is an online FACS (Family and Consumer Sciences) instructor for the Missouri River Educational Consortium. Pam is also grandma to Connor, Eivin, and Claire. She splits her time between Bismarck and The Villages in Florida. And if you know her you have probably received at least one handwritten note from Pam.

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FERTILITY CARE

What's Going On With My Body?

by Jody Kerzman

(ABOVE)
Adrianna and
Nick Bohrer

The Cleveland family—Scott, Lindsay, and four-year-old Miram—is anxious to welcome a baby boy into their family in January.

"We had been trying for a year and a half and couldn't get pregnant," says Lindsay. "I immediately thought it must be my fault."

Then the couple discovered the Creighton Model FertilityCare System™ (CrMS) and started meeting with a local FertilityCare Practitioner. The CrMS relies upon the standardized observation and charting of biological markers, which tell the couple when they are naturally fertile and infertile and discover abnormalities in a woman's reproductive health. Four and a half months after starting the CrMS, Lindsay was pregnant.

"I feel empowered. When we weren't conceiving, it was easy to think there was something wrong with me," recalls Lindsay. "I was working on dissertation and that was stressful. Then I started getting stressed out about getting stressed out. I worried I was too stressed to conceive.

I have a weird cycle, and I thought I was the only one. Our practitioner showed me charts of other people's cycles and there were charts of cycles that looked like mine. I realized I'm not this weird abnormal case. That was empowering."

Stories like the Cleveland's are what keep Jana Heen going. She's been teaching the Creighton Model in the Bismarck diocese since 2004. Until last year, Jana was one of only four FertilityCare Practitioners serving Bismarck and surrounding areas. Now, there are nine.

"That's exciting because for the first time we feel we can get the word out to the general public and be able to handle the number of people who may want to learn the method. I want more women and couples to know about this. Up until now, we've been teaching engaged couples in the church and married couples who have come to us for various reasons. I don't want it to be something that gets hidden in a church," says Jana. "Teaching and empowering women to know more about their bodies is very exciting and it's

"Teaching and empowering women to know more about their bodies is very exciting and it's for all women and married couples."

—Jana Heen, FertilityCare Practitioner

for all women and married couples. I've sat across the table from young women just starting to learn about their cycles to women suffering with health issues or infertility to women who are nearing menopause and trying to figure out that stage. They all want to know how to manage these stages and stay true to themselves. They are attracted to a natural approach their fertility and they desire to understand their bodies."

That understanding is exactly what led Adrianna Bohrer to CrMS.

"I was 18 years old when my health issues started," Adrianna recalls. "I was a senior in high school and the doctors were talking about putting me on medications I'd have to take my whole life."

Adrianna tried medications and made changes to her diet. Both helped at first, but Adrianna's health continued to get worse. After six years of struggles, her health was so bad she had to drop out of college.

"I only had two classes left to graduate, but my health was such a mess that I just couldn't do it. I had learned to manage the pain, but I was also having anxiety and panic attacks. I knew something had to change."

Adrianna's research led her to the Creighton Model.

"I wanted to know what's going on. If all these biomarkers can tell me what's going on with my body, then that's perfect," she says.

By this time, Adrianna was engaged to be married. She started the model, charted her cycles, and sent her information to the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha, Nebraska. Doctors there did a diagnostic surgery, and told Adrianna she had endometrial polyps, PCOS (Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome), endometriosis, and her ovaries were three times their normal size. Six weeks later, she had surgery to remove the endometriosis, polyps, and cysts. Within six weeks, she says her life changed.

"It gave me my life back," says Adrianna. "I had put my life on hold—not only had I dropped out of college, I had also postponed my wedding because of my health. It gave me the ability to look to the



future and make plans and feel like myself again. And then to see the actual charts change was great. It was cool to have that concrete evidence that things are working so much better."

Adrianna's health is the best it's been in years; and she and her husband are expecting a baby in May. She says for the first time, she feels healthy, and empowered. She credits the Creighton Model.

"When I first started using the Creighton model, it wasn't about starting a family. It was about getting my health and my life back," she says. "But the communication that it brought to our marriage strengthened it and really allowed us to let God work in our lives. Being in tune with your body and understanding what's going on is huge. We never thought we'd have a baby this soon, but we were talking and praying about it every month. We weren't necessarily trying but we were open to it and I believe God was working in our lives." *M*

(ABOVE)
The Cleveland family.
Photography:
Frugal Fotos

To learn more about the Creighton Model Fertility Care System, call the Bismarck Fertility Care Center at 701-223-1033 (ext 265) or email Jana at fertilitycarebismarck@gmail.com. Jana says the Creighton model allows infertility and other reproductive health issues to be diagnosed much quicker than some of the more modern methods. Learn more about that, and hear from Lindsay's husband, Scott, about how infertility struggles strengthened their marriage, on our website.

Took What She Did



SHEENA KLAUDT

If there's one thing Sheena Klaudt loves, it's Christmas lights. She loves looking at holiday displays so much, she created a Facebook group to share her great finds with others. It started in 2012 as a group just for her friends and family, but word quickly spread and the group now has over 1,500 members. She also creates a map each year to make it easier to find different displays. That map tends to go a little viral each holiday season, with hundreds of shares on Facebook every year.

"I've had so many people reach out to me and thank me for putting it together. I love that I can help families create holiday traditions.

"One of my favorite memories at Christmas was my mom driving us around Bismarck and Mandan at night looking at Christmas lights. We did a different area of town each night and my sister, brother, mom and I would all pick our favorites. I still love Christmas lights, but right now, the best part is knowing my kids will have the same memories of looking at lights as I have."

Sheena has updated the map for 2016, but if you have a great display, or see one you think should be on the map, email her at bismanchristmaslights@gmail.com. You can join the group on Facebook; just search "I love Christmas Lights - Bismarck Mandan."



MANDY B. ANDERSON & RAYCHEL CHUMLEY

Publishing a book is a pretty big accomplishment, but publishing two books in one year is extra impressive. And it is exactly what the coaches at Big Blue Couch® Coaching have done.

Mandy B. Anderson is the author of "She Who Overcomes," a faith-based account of how God helped her through some tough times in her life, including her battle with cystic fibrosis and a fire that destroyed her family's home and all their belongings.

"It's about overcoming things in our life, growing into women of integrity, and overcoming the challenges that life brings," explains Mandy. "It's a guidebook about how to rise up with grace, courage, and persistence."

Rather than seek out a publisher, Mandy and her business partner, Raychel Chumley, decided to self-publish the book.

"It's been the best way to get the resources to our clients who are asking for them," explains Mandy.

Resources such as Raychel's book "Unbroken."

"It is my story intermixed with a 30-day guided journal and Bible study for women," explains Raychel. "It's really about taking women through a journey of healing, and preparing for the next storm."

Raychel is quick to add that while "Unbroken" is a 30-day Bible study, it's designed to be used over and over again.

"It is more of a 'lifetime resource' than a quick fix. We've got people who are going through the study for the second or third time already."

Both books are available online at bbcbookstore.com.



TINA SCHUMACHER

Tina Schumacher helps people remember life's biggest moments in a way no one else in North Dakota does. Tina is the owner and designer of Captured Memories Floral Preservation, a business she started because she wanted to preserve her daughter's bridal bouquet. Now she is preserving bouquets and other keepsakes inside shadow boxes for dozens of brides each year.

"It's so rewarding for the bride to see her bouquet in the same condition it was when she brought it in," Tina says. "She can add her garter, jewelry, a photo, and program to the shadow box. Some brides even want to add their bridal shoes or champagne glasses."

Tina says it becomes a piece of art.

"It's not something that's manufactured over and over, the same piece all the time. Each one is unique and different."

Tina creates the keepsakes from flowers celebrating the birth of babies and from funeral floral sprays, as well.

"People have cried when they see the flower that was saved from the funeral of their loved one."

Tina has also started offering thumbprint jewelry, and has trademarked another line of sterling silver jewelry called PetalGems®.

"I take two different color flowers and dry the petals, and crush them, and make a gemstone out of them. It's just another keepsake people are wanting."

Learn more about Captured Memories at www.yourcaptured-memories.com



RENEE MURRISH

"Be a guest at your own event."

That's one of Renee Murrish's mottos as an event planner and coordinator, and owner of Signature Events. Renee started her business three years ago and the concept is catching on. Now she can offer her clients a place to host an event too.

In October, Renee joined Edgar Oliveira, owner of Harvest Brazilian Grill in Mandan. After some remodeling to the restaurant on the city's main street, Renee partnered with Edgar to open Harvest Events managed by Signature Events. She says the venue accommodates 250 people and offers six event packages.

"Now that I have a venue, I can bring Signature Events up to another level," Renee says. "I created a team."

Renee's Signature Events team includes Harvest Catering, BeLoud Entertainment, Bismarck Floral and Greenhouse, the Bridal Butler, Kaity Kates, DY Photobooth, and Executive Limousine Services. She says Harvest Events gives her clients a one-stop shop. Renee can work with her team to coordinate every detail of an event at Harvest Events or another location.

Harvest Brazilian Grill is still open for restaurant guests Tuesday through Saturday, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m. and Sunday for brunch, 9:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Harvest Events can be reserved for weddings, parties, and other special events.

"Give us a year and I think we're going to be booked," Renee says.

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SOMMER JACOB

Merry Christmas!

Wishing you a joyful ride into 2017.

May it be filled with peace, success and happiness.



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WE'RE REMINDED OF
WHAT'S TRULY IMPORTANT**

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IN YOUR WORLD

Joy

by Noreen Keesey

It's the holiday season. Lights, music, gifts, family, fancy meals, and making memories. Did I forget to mention travel, and shopping, and cooking, and bills, and expectations? So many expectations. There are shoulds, musts, and have to's all around, and quite a number of them come from within. It can all add up to quite a bit of pressure. With all of the busyness and stress that comes along with the holidays, how do you find joy?

One suggestion is to lower expectations. Spend some time thinking about what you really want during the holidays, and what about them brings you stress. Then change things up a bit to get more of what brings you joy and less of what decreases it. Maybe this means there is a gift or dollar limit set to keep your finances in check when the bills come due. Perhaps there are three cookie recipes made instead of seven, or you ditch the baking altogether and buy a platter from the local bakery. It might just be time to tell your family that you are having the holidays at home and will visit them over New Year's, or host them in your home this year so that your little ones wake up in their own beds and you can decrease your time on the road.

It may not be best to toss all your

traditions at once and start over, though if that appeals to you it might be worth a try! But if there is something you would like to let go, consider whether it can be left undone and see how you like the result. Communicate with your loved ones about what you'd like to change and why, and give them plenty of time so they are not left feeling hurt and confused. They may be very happy to have the conversation and share some ideas of what they would also like to see done differently.

Another idea is to focus on activities rather than things. Research shows that money spent on experiences is a good investment in our well-being. All too often, purchasing stuff leads to regret. That regret can show up when the bills arrive in a month or when the item purchased is left unused or unloved in just days or weeks. The investment in experiences pays off in the anticipation of the event, the event itself, and in the memories created that can be cherished long into the future. Check out plays, concerts, and local activities that you and your loved ones can participate in together.

For bringing joy to your everyday life, now and beyond the holidays, pay attention to the little things. Train yourself to notice all the wondrous things that occur around us. Look at the sunrise or sunset. Smile at someone and say hello. Tell your favorite joke and share a laugh with a colleague. Go to lunch with a friend you see infrequently. Find videos of babies laughing on the internet and play them twice. Do something nice for someone. It is said that what you focus on expands, so focus your attention carefully. Choose joy, and have yourself a very merry holiday season! *NW*



Noreen is a leadership coach and trainer who believes deeply in the Army leadership principle "Know yourself and seek self-improvement." She enjoys reading, watching movies, and laughing with friends over a good cocktail. She is uncomfortable with small talk and is scared of moths.

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Yuletide Joy

SHARING THEIR MUSIC
by Jody Kerzman

Music brings joy.

It's something four North Dakota women have known since they were very young, and now they're sharing their music with the world, bringing joy to people beyond their small North Dakota hometowns.

We caught up with North Dakota's own Kat Perkins, Gwen Sebastian, and Kendra and Krista Slaubaugh of Tigirlily.

They shared about their careers, their passion for music, and how music brings them joy every day.





(ABOVE AND BELOW) Photography: Eric Warner



Photography:
Vanie Poyey Photography

Kat Perkins

Kat Perkins is no stranger to writing songs. She's written dozens of songs, and every song has meaning. At the moment, she says the most inspirational song she's written is one called "Joy, Joy, Joy."

"I was inspired to write that song by the kids I see in my classroom visits. They really inspired me to write it and I get a lot of inspiration from kids," explains Kat Perkins. "They don't even know how inspiring they are; their enthusiasm to learn, listen, and to live fearlessly is just awesome."

Kat has lived a pretty fearless life herself. She's been performing since kindergarten.

"I begged to sing in front of people," remembers Kat. "I grew up in small town North Dakota, so my audiences were talent shows, church programs,

school, and community programs. It didn't matter. I was hooked."

At age 15, Kat started her own band, made up of her family members. They played every chance they got. Whether it was a street dance, talent show, or community days, you name it, Kat and her band were there. She spent the summer after graduating high school performing in the Medora Musical.

"By the time I was 18, I really felt like I wanted to pursue music as a career," says Kat. "So I moved to the big city of Minneapolis. I auditioned for a lot of musicals and theater productions. I started performing for a living, and felt like I could actually call myself a professional. But I grew up in a family where education was super important so I wanted to make sure I got a degree too."

Kat started taking college courses while still in high school in Scranton, North Dakota. Coming from a long line of teachers, her first instinct was to get a teaching degree.

"I wanted to have that in case performing didn't work out," she explains. "I soon found out that it was realistic to making a living performing."

Kat changed her focus, and got a degree in cosmetology instead.

"Becoming a cosmetologist really helped me become more of a jack-of-all-trades. I still do my own hair and makeup much of the time."

THIS IS HER VOICE

Kat's big break came in 2013, when she was chosen for the blind auditions on the popular television reality show, *"The Voice."*

"The producers found me on YouTube and asked me to come audition for the show," remembers Kat. "That decision forever changed my life. Putting myself on that national platform where millions of people could hear me sing really took my career to another level and brought more opportunities."

Kat made the top five on *"The Voice,"* and the show kickstarted her career. She released her first single, *"Fearless,"* in August 2014. Today, she is busier than ever. She performs full time; her summers are spent doing outdoor gigs at fairs and festivals across the country. She has performed overseas for the troops and every fall and the spring, she spends her time visiting schools.

"We do lyceums and assemblies for kids," says Kat. "We talk about being fearless and kind, and talk about anti-bullying. We do a mini-concert for the students too," she explains. "I always joke that if I can inspire one kid to try something new, to step outside of their comfort zone, then I've done my job. I love to inspire kids through my music and my story. I want to empower them to make their dreams come true if they work hard and remain fear-

less. I also stress the importance of being kind. Kindness is so important for success."

CHRISTMAS TOUR AND FAMILY JOY

This time of year, Kat is all about Christmas.

"I love Christmas," says Kat. "I developed our Christmas show last year and had such a blast doing it. I wish I could do Christmas music year round!"

Kat's tour kicked off in Bismarck after Thanksgiving. She'll play 15 dates in 15 different cities, finishing up on December 23. That's her birthday, and she plans to spend it with her family.

"My family is everything to me," says Kat. "Family is what gives me the most joy. My parents retired and moved to the Twin Cities to be closer to my sister, Kelly, and me. And now Kelly has kids, so I have nieces and nephews and they add so much more joy to the family."

The joy her family brings makes up for the things Kat has had to give up for her career.

"In the beginning the biggest sacrifices were financial; I could never afford to take vacations. Even being with my friends was a sacrifice because my work happens on the weekends, when most people are unwinding and hanging out. That never worked for me," says Kat. "It was hard to make and keep friends. I still don't get to do much of that; I work nights and weekends and I travel all the time."

"This is a very fulfilling career, the fans and the recognition is so fun, but it is not a lucrative career. The paychecks are not consistent like they are if you work a nine to five job. There are some months that I don't get a check. I had to learn quickly how to budget for that."

But she didn't have to learn how to work hard; she learned that as a kid in Scranton, North Dakota.

"The great thing about growing up in a small town is they all had my back when I started this journey. They still do. I can still feel the support, and I know they're cheering me on." *M*

Kat Perkins shares her favorite Christmas memories, including her all-time favorite Christmas gift, on our website. You'll also find a link to her website there, where you can find a list of all her upcoming performances and where to buy her music.



Photography:
Michael Gomez



Gwen Sebastian

Ask Gwen Sebastian what brings her joy, and she's quick to answer.

"Music. Being with my family and friends. Being with my husband. And bubble baths," she answers with a laugh.

Aside from the bubble baths, it's a list you'd probably expect from Gwen, who has been singing and performing for as long as she can remember. Gwen grew up on a farm near Hebron, North Dakota. Her parents were not only farmers, but also musicians, a gift they passed along to their daughter.

"I started singing with them when I was pretty little," remembers Gwen. "We played fairs, weddings, even bars when they'd let me in."

After graduating high school, Gwen set off for nursing school. But she never finished. Her heart was already in Nash-

ville.

"I always wanted to move there and to be a part of the songwriting community there. So, about 20 years ago now, I followed my dreams to Nashville. I've been here ever since."

She was not an overnight success. It took six years of being there, working a regular job as a property manager to get into music.

"I was really intimidated by it, even though it was the one thing I wanted most in life."

Fourteen years ago, Gwen went on tour with her band, and she's been touring ever since. The biggest boost to her career came in 2012, when she auditioned for *"The Voice."*

"I did it because I was ready to take my career to another level," says Gwen. "I was lucky enough to pick from three

coaches: CeeLo Green, Adam Levine, and Blake Shelton."

She picked Blake Shelton, a choice that forever changed her career.

"After I was done on *'The Voice,'* Blake asked me to go on tour with him, so I did that for quite some time. I had a single with him called *'My Eyes.'* He was great and did so much for me," Gwen says. "At the time I was touring with Blake Shelton, he was married to Miranda Lambert so I became friends with her too. For awhile I was singing with Blake, Miranda, and doing my own shows. I was pretty busy! I'm currently singing back-up for Miranda, doing shows with her, as well as my own shows."

SINGING AND WRITING

Gwen is doing more than just performing with Miranda Lambert. She co-wrote three of the songs on Miranda's new album, *"The Weight of These Wings,"* which was released on November 18. Gwen helped write *"Runnin' Just in Case,"* *"Dear Old Sun,"* and *"I've Got Wheels."*

"I've become a much better writer. Every time I sit down with other writers I become better," says Gwen. "Writing with Miranda, and with other great female writers like Ashley Monroe and Terri Jo Box has been amazing. And it's true, the more you write, the better you get."

Gwen has also been busy writing songs for herself. Her new album is set to be released in early 2017.

"My own music style has evolved since when I first started writing songs. I think all my influences over the years come through in my writing. I am not just a country music artist, especially with my new album. I have been influenced by so many different styles of music, including Queen, Madonna, Bonnie Raitt, and even Dolly Parton.

"I'm also influenced by North Dakota. One song on that album is called *'Oh Cowboy,'* which is about my parents, and making a living on a farm, and the hardships that come with that. It's about raising kids and then letting them go," she explains. "Other songs on the album

are influenced by other life experiences I've had. I've been through a divorce, and I've seen friends go through it. It's hard. But not all the songs are that deep. There's a part of me that really just likes a good groove in a song that will make them want to get up and dance."

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Gwen knows when it comes to influencing others, she's in a great position to do just that. She considers herself a role model, not just for young girls, but for women of all ages.

"As women, I think we are all examples to each other," explains Gwen. "We can learn a lot from each other. I just want to make sure women know that they don't have to settle. That was always my motto; if you don't like where you're at, whether it's your relationship or your job, find something that makes you happy. I know we have responsibilities, and I'm not saying women should walk out on their responsibilities, but women need to find the light, find their passion. Because if you're not happy, others around you aren't either.

"I hope young girls find their light and the confidence to be themselves and are not afraid to be different. We live in a world where social media is a part of young girls' lives everyday. There are bullies everywhere, but there are also allies out there. Find a good group of friends that will stand up for you. And then make sure you stand up for others, and for what you believe in too."

For Gwen, doing that has meant making some difficult decisions. She decided years ago to pursue music instead of motherhood, a choice that wasn't easy. But there are little things, and moments that assure her she's on the path she's supposed to be.

"A fan got a tattoo of the lyrics of my song *'Nothing,'* and that was one of the most surprising things that has ever happened in my music career. I was really humbled by that."

And, at the end of the day, Gwen knows there's always a bubble bath waiting for her. *W*

Gwen has two all time favorite Christmas gifts—she shares about them on our website. Also on our website, we've got a link to her website, where you can learn even more about Gwen.



Photography: EAVE Images

Tigirlily

Kendra and Krista Slaubaugh of Hazen, North Dakota have been making music together for as long as they can remember.

"We've been singing together since we were tiny little tots," says 20-year-old Kendra with a smile. "We started doing YouTube videos and community events and it started getting bigger from there. We started getting calls from out of state to come perform for different events and since then we've recorded music in Nashville."

"In the past year we've performed in New York, Texas, and Nashville and all kinds of places in between," says 18-year-old Krista. "Now we're really branching out more nationally and internationally with our media sites."

It's been a bit of a whirlwind for the sisters. They've performed in front of

thousands of fans, opened for acts like Big and Rich, Justin Moore, and Thompson Square. They have been rapidly growing an international fan base via YouTube, where their videos have been viewed more than four million times. Their social media sites show over 145,000 fans. It all started four years ago, when they finally settled on the name Tigirlily.

"We used to go by Kendra and Krista," explains Krista. "But we wanted to find a name that was catchy and that people would remember. We came across tigerlily and fell in love. It's a flower, it's girly, and it's pretty and fun. We thought that described us pretty well. Then we changed the spelling to Tigirlily, so it really has 'girl' in the name and it fits us even better now. I'm more of the tiger, the fierce personality. Kendra is more

bubbly, more of the flowery, girly one. The name just has so many different meanings and it fits us perfectly."

LIVING A DREAM

It isn't just the name that fits these sisters perfectly. This career does too.

"People always say find what you love and make a career out of it and that's what we're trying to do," says Krista.

"Today we were just at a meeting and it hit me—we just got to eat and talk for two hours, exchanging ideas and creating art and that's part of our work. Who can say that? I definitely have 'pinch me' moments. We are so lucky we get to do music. It started with us just loving to do music and then actually became a career."

"It has always been a goal for us from day one we want to make music our career," says Krista. "Even though we're young we're going to go for it."

Their dreams and hard work are paying off. After spending two years writing new music, they were finally able to record that music in Nashville at the end of August. Their new album is set to be released after the new year. It will be their fourth album, but this one, they say, is different.

"It is definitely very different from what we've done before, but it's different in a good way," explains Kendra. "We're growing. We're going a different direction in our lives than we were when we first started Tigirlily, and we want our music to move in that direction too."

A quick scroll through their YouTube channel shows the growth and the change they've gone through. The girls giggle as they think about those early videos, but they say they don't regret posting them.

"I don't regret it because it's what helped us get to where we are today," says Kendra. "It's just growing pains along with way and that's part of it. Any artist looks at their first music and goes, 'look where I am now.' We've learned so much along the way and gained so much knowledge."

"You can really see the evolution of

me on YouTube," laughs Krista. "We started posting videos when I was in sixth grade. It is hilarious to look at those videos."

In fact, the sisters say those old videos and those very public growing pains have helped them be positive role models for young girls.

"I can show myself in those awkward junior high ages and show girls it's okay. You're going to be okay," says Krista.

"We always are thinking about that because growing up we had role models. If we can be role models to other young girls and anyone in general we're doing something right," says Kendra. "We take that seriously because we know how important that is and how limited good role models are today."

TOUGH CHOICES

Their rise to stardom hasn't come without sacrifices. Instead of going off to college like their friends, the sisters stayed home in Hazen. They're balancing their musical career with online college classes, all while watching their friends have the traditional college experiences.

"We stay in touch with our friends through social media and texting," says Kendra. "There are times I wish I could be with them, but I have to stay home and create a video or learn a new song instead because that is my job."

"I was really considering playing college volleyball. I toured a couple schools, but I ultimately had to decide music is where I want to be in 10 years," says Krista. "I probably never would become a professional volleyball player. I love volleyball, but music is going to be my career for hopefully the rest of my life."

Music is what brings these sisters joy. Singing it, playing it, performing it, sharing it with others.

"It's crazy to see how music can touch people," says Kendra. "Music is such a universal language and touches people all over the world. That makes it all worth it. If our music can help one person get through a bad day or make them happier on a good day, that brings us joy." *TM*


Visit our website to hear some of Kendra and Krista's favorite holiday memories. They also share how one of their greatest role models, Gwen Sebastian, has helped them every step of their musical journey.



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THRIVENT CELEBRATES WOMEN OF GENEROSITY:

Sister Barbara Weber

Story and Photos by Marci Narum

Sister Barbara Weber is no fan of needles. So it might surprise you to know where she spends nearly three hours every Wednesday. Sister Barb has a standing appointment at United Blood Services to donate platelets.

"It's never a burden for her," says Linda Valentine, Donor Relations Specialist. "The fact that she's saving lives is a pleasure for her. And having her here is a pleasure for us."

Sister Barb has been part of the community for 55 years. So has her heart. She began donating blood in 1968. During the 80s she switched to donating platelets, a process that takes about five times longer than donating whole blood.

"It's my civic donation. I don't do anything else out in the community," Sister Barb explains. "I can do this and it helps others right away."

Platelets are tiny blood cells that help the body's blood form clots. They have a shelf life of only seven days, so donations such as Sister Barb's are taken to local and state hospitals or flown immediately to other hospitals in United Blood Service's four-state region, including South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming.

Sister Barb says donating platelets is a sacrifice she believes can result in a greater benefit.

"More people can use the platelets.

Surgery patients and cancer patients are the biggest recipients," she says.

Sister Barb was a social worker at CHI St. Alexius in Bismarck for 39 years and began serving as a chaplain there in 2005, so she often sees patients who need what she has donated.

"When I'm at the hospital I wonder if the blood is mine."

At United Blood Services, the staff never has to wonder if they will see Sister Barb.

"She's here every week," says Linda. "We make calls every day asking people to come in once every eight weeks. This woman is here every week without ever having to call her."

And her weekly donations have added up—to a number which no one else at the Bismarck donation center can match or even come close to.

"She has donated more than 90 gallons," says Linda. "Do you know how many donation days and times it takes to do 90 gallons?"

The answer is 730 visits. And counting.

"If that isn't dedication I don't know what is," says Linda.

And it's a lot of needle sticks for someone who is not a fan of them.

Sister Barb smiles, "As long as I don't have to look at the needle I'm okay." *M*



THRIVENT
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LIVING TREASURES

Ann Leingang and Monica Schmidt

JOY AT 325°

by Marci Narum | Photography: Photos by Jacy



Age and circumstance are not relevant when discovering a new purpose in life and finding joy in it.

Consider Ann Leingang, a feisty 88-year old who raised ten children and 40 grandchildren. Many of them live far away now but Ann remembers fondly all the baked goodies she made for them over the years.

"My counter was completely full of cookies," Ann recalls. "As the kids came home from school or work all these little hands kept coming. Most of the time I never had enough. By the end of the day they had them all gone and the next day I had to bake again."

Ann is a resident at St. Vincent's Continuing Care Center in Bismarck. She moved in about a year-and-a-half ago after suffering a broken leg in an accident. Ann says her health is fine otherwise and she is looking forward to moving out; she wants to live in her own apartment. Until then, she needs something to help pass the time. So she's baking cookies.

"I didn't have anything to do. I was just sitting in my room and time was going by. It made me feel terrible," she says.

"Somebody came along and said, 'you want to bake cookies?' I said, 'yeah, that sounds good!'"

That was in September. Ann is now the reason you can count on dozens of extra smiles in the hallways of St. Vincent's every-other week as she and her friend and baking buddy, 89-year old Monica Schmidt, hand out fresh-from-the-oven cookies to staff, residents, and visitors.

"We made chocolate chip cookies, zucchini bread, banana bread, zucchini cook-

ies, and monster cookies,” says Monica.

“First we took cookies to the fire department and police station and now we’re distributing them around here,” says Ann. “We made chocolate chip cookies and after that we had a job. We’re in!”

On the day we visited, Ann and Monica baked flourless peanut butter cookies.

“Here comes somebody,” says Ann, rolling forward in her wheelchair, enthusiastically greeting a couple and their toddler in the hallway. “You’re at the right place! Want to taste our cookies? We just took them out of the oven.”

“They like to bake them for the staff because they appreciate what the staff does for them and they like to spread joy by baking for others,” says Allie Hanson, Activity Director and Volunteer Coordinator at St. Vincent’s.

“It’s so easy to do this,” Ann says. “Allie furnishes all the ingredients and in an hour or so we’re in and out. We’d bake every day if they’d let us.”

Ann and Monica bake about three dozen cookies each time. But the cookies don’t last long.

“If they don’t all get cookies then they say, ‘oh, I heard you baked cookies the other day and I didn’t even get one!’”

So the ladies are planning to make a bigger batch of some special cookies for the holiday.

“At Christmas we’re going to make Pfeffernusse cookies that all the old people like. They have anise in them,” Ann says.

Monica adds, “It’s a big recipe that makes 100 cookies.”

A big takeaway from Ann and Monica’s story: whatever your circumstance or age there is no recipe for having purpose in life. It’s whatever brings you joy and gives joy to others too.

As Ann says, “I like life. It’s what you make of it. When you have something that can make somebody happy and feel good, it makes your day for the rest of the day and time goes by faster.” *M*



Ann Leingang

PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES

1 cup peanut butter
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon of vanilla

Bake for 15 minutes in 325° oven



Monica Schmidt





HEALTHY HOLIDAYS

GIVE KIDS THE GIFT OF FITNESS THIS CHRISTMAS

by Marnie Walth

There are generally two types of people living in North Dakota—those who eschew winter and those who embrace it. Those who embrace winter look forward to and welcome the traditions and activities only cold weather brings—sledding, snowball battles, snowboarding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, ice fishing, and ice skating.

It goes without saying that the latter group—the embracers—are more likely to be active, healthy, and well, whereas the eschewers suffer disproportionate rates of seasonal affective disorder, depression, and lethargy.

Help the young people in your life become part of the embracer set with Christmas gifts that embrace the snow, cold, and ice. A few suggestions for the kids on your list:

DAKOTA ZOO MEMBERSHIP

\$65

The Dakota Zoo is open year round, weather permitting. If you have not visited the zoo during the winter, you must. Some of the species that seem to have little interest in visitors during the summer—bears, tigers, pumas, snow leopards—take more interest in the winter months. Walk the perimeter of the gray wolves' display area and

the wolves are more likely to walk with you than ignore you like they do on a warm summer day.

A one-year family membership is \$65 and includes unlimited admission for two adults and all children in the family ages 18 and under.

CROSS COUNTRY SKIS

\$200-\$400

Cross country ski enthusiasts are perhaps the most happy people in town when big, fluffy flakes fall from the sky, making it possible to ski smoothly on groomed trails at Riverwood Golf Course and General Sibley Park in Bismarck and Prairie West Golf Course the Missouri River Natural Area in Mandan. In total, the two cities provide more than 20 miles of groomed trails. No fee is required. Cross Ranch State Park (35 miles north of Mandan) offers an additional 10 miles of groomed trails along the Missouri River.

Equipment requirements include boots, poles, and skis with bindings. If buying new equipment, a beginner set will cost \$200-\$400. Before buying, consider renting. Riverwood Golf Course offers daily ski rentals 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Rental fees are \$7/hour for adults and \$3/hour for young adults and children ages 21 and under.



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A day pass plus rental fee for ski or snowboard equipment ranges from \$40 to \$50 for kids 12 and under and adult fees are \$45-\$55, depending upon the day of the week.

SLEDDING

\$20-\$200

Sledding appeals to kids of all ages. Plastic saucer sleds and inflatable tubes—which certainly do the job of transporting its owner quickly down a snow-covered slope—cost \$20-\$50. Wooden toboggans are pricier: \$50-\$200. Add a festive coffee mug and bag of hot chocolate mix to complete the package.

SNOWSHOES

\$40-\$300

Kids who like to hike and explore will love snowshoeing. The bigfoot-like shoes help snowshoers skim the top of

snow-covered ground without sinking to the bottom. By spreading your weight over an oversized, flat surface area, snowshoes allow users to hike, climb and even run through snowy conditions.

Snowshoeing is allowed in park areas; those on snowshoes are asked to steer clear of groomed ski trails.

Snowshoe bindings are built to be compatible with hiking boots, so snowboard boots are not required.

Other great gift ideas include cold-weather gear and gadgets that maximize the outdoor adventure experience: headlamp, GPS tracking system, cold weather gloves, hand and feet warmers, a CamelBak water system.

The key is to embrace cold-weather fun. Merry Christmas. *M*



Outdoor enthusiast Marnie Walth is public policy director at Sanford Health in Bismarck. She and her husband Shayne have two active sons who, following in their father's footsteps, prefer downhill skiing over cross country skiing and sledding over snowshoeing.

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OH MAN

BILL & JERRY SCHLOSSER

by Jamie Christensen | Submitted Photos

"No blisters after eight days of trekking. My muscles may never talk to me again. That may have something to do with the previous two days of 17 and 18 mile treks..."

That statement was part of a message home from Jerry Schlosser on August 30, 2016. Roughly 467 miles of trekking afoot over 32 days, more than 5,000 miles from home—what drives a person to do that?

After being inspired by friends who had taken this journey, the reasons were different for brothers Bill and Jerry Schlosser. But when Bill told Jerry he was going to do this, it didn't take long for Jerry to say he was coming with. A message to friends and family from the walk explains their tenacity:

"Wandering along at two to three miles per hour for 12 or 13 miles leaves plenty of time to reflect," wrote Bill. "This day was about the kid, my brother. Jerry was that scrappy little brother who always knew he could do it if I could. I was always Roy Rogers like, and Jerry was the John Wayne kind of guy."

The pair recently completed The Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James). It is a large network of ancient pilgrim routes

stretching across Europe and coming together at the tomb of St. James (Santiago in Spanish) in Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain. The Way of St. James was an important Christian pilgrimage during the Middle Ages.

About 250,000 people walk this trail each year. In fact, the pilgrimage is featured in the 2010 movie *"The Way,"* written and produced by Emilio Estevez and stars his father, Martin Sheen.

Reactions to their decision were mixed, especially for Jerry who had suffered a heart attack last fall. They began walking on August 22, 2016 in Roncesvalles, Spain and arrived in Santiago on September 22.

Jerry's trek was about thanksgiving, giving thanks to God for his wife and family. Bill takes his explanation a bit further.

"My faith has been sharpened and deepened into an affirmation that finds me growing closer to the divine," says Bill. "That's my mission. Believing I am now on the correct path leaves me to continue traveling it with the intention of contributing to the weave of our family's spiritual fabric. It's about a legacy which is kind of like planting a garden that I will never see grow, but the planting is there, left to

(BELOW)
Left Bill,
right Jerry





manifest itself from the seeds sown."

The journey was challenging physical-ly, mentally, and spiritually. The trek is also very social. The two were inspired by the incredible stories of other pilgrims they met from all over the world.

"What a marvelous experience that adjoins total strangers to a common purpose, each with their own reasons, that connects us all as brothers and sisters," says Bill. "I can't help but think that something is made better by this."

Along the trail they wandered in and out of many rustic villages and larger cities. They were particularly fascinated by the number, beauty, and history of the churches along the route.

"The outsides were relatively bland but the insides were exquisite, and ornate, and spectacular in architecture and décor," says Jerry. "The frescos, the sculptures, the frieze images, the architecture, the statues—so many attempts by man to manifest the glory of God. Each was more inspiring than the last, if that's possible."

These two real estate business partners, past running partners, and brothers have amassed a wealth of history, knowl-

edge, and love over a lifetime together. This experience has bound them together even tighter.

"One picture I took of us was a reflection in the mirror across the room from where we were having dinner," says Jerry. "This Camino experience was like that mirror reflection—a reflection of our lives together—as children, as business partners, and as brothers. What a great ride!"

"He's right sometimes and wrong others, but it just doesn't matter. He's my brother," says Bill. "An expression I've heard is 'You can't choose your relatives.' Well, someone certainly chose the best brother for me."

Although receiving a certificate of accomplishment for completing the Way was satisfying, the incredible growth of mind, body, and spirit—and sense of unity between them—are far greater rewards. *M*



Jamie Christensen is a full-time licensed real estate agent, a communications and marketing professional, wife, and mom. She dreams of traveling but for now being a taxi driver for her kids will have to do.



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CHRISTMAS IN WALES

AN UNEXPECTED GIFT

by Carole Hemingway | Submitted Photo

It was December 23, 1988. I boarded a train, alone from Paddington Station, in London, bound for the coast of Wales for the holidays. My friends greeted me at the train station, and whisked me off to a local pub for lunch.

The pub was noisy, a large, smoke-filled room with lots of laughter, music, and drinking. Sober 10 years, I opted for hot pots of fresh brewed tea, and told the waiter to keep them coming.

Across the mist-filled room, in this very old tavern, sat a handsome woman, about 80 years old, that kept a laser beam stare on me. I finally asked my friends who she might be.

Marion answered, "Oh well, yes. She is your father's third wife."

Before I could put down my scalding cup of tea and form words again, the woman stood up and appeared like a mountain in front of me and said, "You're his daughter, aren't you?"

I truly felt faint and couldn't stand up on rubber band legs. When I did rise to shake her hand, I was a bit unsteady. She took my arm, waved to the waiter, who obviously knew her and she pointed to a private room, and a private table by a lead-glass window. We sat down and ordered lunch.

She looked at me with those eyes, like beams of light, over her menu. She was a chain smoker, and it was like eating in the middle of a brush fire.

Martha Gellhorn stood out, a defiant, strong, determined woman with purpose, though her face looked like an 18-wheeler had run over it, all time-dated, with ongoing character. We had so much to tell each other, to share and



we simply bonded that afternoon.

Who could eat? If you paid me \$100, I couldn't tell you what I ordered. I couldn't take my eyes off her, either, all these breathless revelations awaiting us, my answers to her questions, so much to say.

After lunch, the long mahogany table was bare except for several ashtrays which Martha made use of. A chair behind another table was occupied by an older gentleman with a long, bony jaw and a bad haircut, his eyes fixed on both of us. I paid little attention to his presence; however, Martha stood up, squinting at me through the smoke from her cigarette. With her hands on her hips, she shouted to the man, across the room, "Bloody hell, can't you see this is a private conversation?"

Without hesitation he got up and disappeared. Later, she explained to me he was one of those "stupid, damned newspaper men" who followed her around. I knew then, she was genuine. Giving an order like that, well, she was my father's perfect match! The female version of Ernest.

She ordered champagne and told

me about my father. Things like, "Just at the point when I wanted to kill him he would make me laugh." As I listened, I really understood "the power of this couple;" too bad they couldn't share that power, they may have stayed married.

I liked her spirit and humanity. She was a breath of fresh air even in the blueness of that smoke-filled room, in a world smothered in superficiality. Even into her 70s and 80s, Martha traveled to El Salvador to cover the brutal war there. I'm surprised her path didn't cross those of our own Patrick Atkinson!

The hours passed; I walked her home, arm in arm, like best friends. She had a sweet little cottage in Wales and an apartment in London. Walking through the door, I could see the private collection of her life and knew instinctively not many were privileged to enter that cottage.

I made arrangements for my friends to pick me up at an appoint-

ed time, once they arrived in their car, Martha turned and hugged me, closed her eyes, touched the outlines of my face with her unmanicured nails and said in that deep-throated, husky voice, "Don't ever let anyone tell you, you're not your father's daughter. You wear his face which are your credentials."

I knew then, we would always be connected; at that moment I wanted us to prick our thumbs and swear a blood oath. I felt that close to her.

I left her cottage with a full heart, who could ask for more? Who thought a charming jaunt to an untouched corner of the world would bring me to this? I pulled at a thread of destiny that afternoon, and spent several joyful hours with Martha Gellhorn. Who gets to do that? *M*



Carole Hemingway is an internationally regarded author, speaker, and historical researcher. She currently lives along the coast of Maine where she is writing a book about Gettysburg, and waiting to publish another book about her father, Ernest.

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IN MEMORY OF MYRT ARMSTRONG:

She Planted the Seeds of Hope and Yielded Joy

Story and Photos by Lexi Kerzman

Dedicated, passionate, vibrant, opinionated. Those are just a few words that describe the late Myrt Armstrong. Myrt passed away on October 24, 2016 but her legacy is everlasting.

Myrt dedicated her life to advocating for mental health. In 1970 she joined the Mental Health Association of North Dakota. She was passionate about her work; she spent the next 25 years of her life as the organization's executive director. In her years, Myrt worked around the clock, and even brought a suicide hotline to her house.

"You would be visiting her house and she would answer the red phone," says Diane Zainhofsky, Executive Director of the Abused Adult Resource Center. "She would drop what she was doing and answer the phone, because she didn't think the phone was answered quickly enough other places."

Nearly 20 years ago, Myrt volunteered at the Abused Adult Resource Center, and the Seeds of Hope thrift store. Five years later, she was instrumental in helping to open the Christmas store, a place where anyone can purchase quality Christmas merchandise at thrift store prices. The store includes everything from Christmas

trees, lights, decorative plates, and more. The store gave Myrt a chance to mix her love for Christmas and her work together.

In its first year of operation, the Christmas store brought in \$10,000. All proceeds from the Christmas store go directly back to the AARC, where they help pay for support services for abused women and children served by the AARC. Each year the store continues to grow—in 2015, the Christmas store profits totaled \$65,000. Revenue generated from the store makes up about 26 percent of the AARC's total yearly budget.

"It's just amazing the donations people in this community make," Diane said. "First of all they love Christmas and they want to change it out and they know the Christmas store is a good cause."

Dorinda Eckrorth has been working at the store since the beginning when she started as a volunteer. She grew close to Myrt and cherishes every moment she shared with her.

"She was a wonderful person to work with," Dorinda says. "She made you feel like you were the only person that mattered. And it's just hard being the first year without her."

The Christmas store is located in the basement of the Seeds of Hope Thrift Store at 520 East Main Avenue in Bismarck. Seeds of Hope is open 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Donations are accepted every day except Wednesdays. Donations should be clean and usable. Call the store at 701-222-8895 for more information



Myrt's funeral was held the same night as the Christmas store opened for the 2016 season. Dorinda believes it was Myrt's way of showing she will always be around. Both Dorinda and Diane know that as long as the Christmas store is open, no one will forget the name Myrt Armstrong and what she did for this community.

"There's just no way anyone will ever be able to forget her in the Christmas store," Diane says. "We have a beautiful picture we are going to display of her and we are hoping to officially rename the store to the Myrt Armstrong Christmas Store. I will never let this community forget what she has done for the AARC and for our Christmas store."

With Myrt's passion and dedication, she brought joy to the community. She worked with people who were in a low part of their life and helped bring them back to joy. The Christmas store is only part of what she contributed to the community, but continues to bring joy to many.

"Our store is a happy part of our agency," says Diane. "It always looks wonderful. People love Christmas and even if they just walk in the store and don't buy anything they get an overwhelming feeling of joy." *M*



Lexi Kerzman is a senior at Bismarck High School, where she is the editor of the Hiherald and is also involved in basketball and track. She is a big fan of Christmas, coffee, and holiday socks.

ABOUT AARC

- The Abused Adult Resource Center (AARC) began as a citizen's task force in 1976.
- The AARC serves victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- The AARC serves seven counties: Burleigh, Morton, Grant, Sioux, Emmons, Kidder, and Sheridan.
- The AARC provides emergency support, crisis intervention, temporary shelter, food, counseling, and advocacy to victims.
- The AARC works with the community to develop an awareness and sensitivity to issues of domestic violence and sexual assault, and to establish programs to break the cycle of abuse.
- To get help, victims can contact the AARC 24-hours a day, seven days a week toll-free at 1-866-341-7009.

To learn more call 701-222-8370 or go to www.abusedadultresourcecenter.com.



Myrt Armstrong
in the Christmas
store



COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTOR

RUTH MEIERS – LUKE'S KITCHEN | SUBMITTED PHOTOS



GIVE US A LITTLE HISTORY OF RUTH MEIERS/LUKE'S KITCHEN

Ruth Meiers is more than just a homeless shelter. We provide numerous essential services to the homeless at multiple facilities in the Bismarck-Mandan area. The programs and services offered at Ruth Meiers create a transitional pathway from homelessness to community reintegration, providing services across the continuum to help our clients overcome barriers and access the resources available to them.

To further our mission, Ruth Meiers is creating Luke's Kitchen, an open table with the purpose of engaging those who are struggling, supporting those who need nourishment, and providing the tools and training to impact the lives of many.

Luke's Kitchen is being created in honor of Luke Meiers, a nephew to Ruth Meiers. Luke invested his life in serving those who are homeless, at-risk of becoming homeless, or suffering in our community. Since his passing in 2015, his passion for serving others has been greatly missed. To honor his legacy, and to address a current gap in services in the community, Ruth Meiers is creating Luke's Kitchen, which will provide a warm noon meal to the community, seven days per week.

HOW IS LUKE'S KITCHEN DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SOUP KITCHENS?

Luke's Kitchen, to be located at our 23rd Street shelter, is not your typical "soup kitchen." Yes it is an open table where anyone from the community can receive a warm meal, but it also focuses on providing additional services

that will promote self-sufficiency. We see Luke's Kitchen as an opportunity to connect individuals and families in need with the right services and resources to help them overcome barriers. Laundry and shower facilities will be available, as well as a technology room with computers available for job searching, developing resumes, and communicating with family and friends. In addition, case managers will be available to help the homeless and those at risk of homelessness access additional services at Ruth Meiers and at other agencies across the community. Luke's Kitchen is a first step in the transitional pathway offered at Ruth Meiers, to help the homeless reintegrate into the community and become self-sufficient.

HOW CAN PEOPLE CONTACT YOU?

Luke's Kitchen is expected to open by the end of the year. Information on the exact date of opening will be available on our website: www.ruthmeiers.org. Individuals seeking more information can call Ruth Meiers at 701-222-2108 or send an email to director@ruthmeiers.org. Information will be made publicly available as the renovation and implementation progresses. Check back with us regularly, or sign up for our electronic newsletter on our website, to stay aware of the progress and launch time frame.

HOW CAN PEOPLE DONATE?

Individuals can donate on our website or by calling Ruth Meiers' main office at 701-222-2108. You can also mail donations to PO Box 2092 Bismarck ND 58502-2092.

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

Volunteers: We and our clients rely on members of the community to keep our programs going and our organization thriving. In 2015, Ruth Meiers utilized over 1,100 volunteers that provided more than 4,000 volunteer hours. Luke's Kitchen will utilize volunteers to help prepare and serve meals each day. Volunteer shifts and schedules will be posted on our website. Anyone interested in volunteering should visit our website to complete a volunteer application.

Donations: We are also currently seeking financial and product donations to support Luke's Kitchen. Financial donations will support the minor renovations required to separate Luke's Kitchen from the current Men's Shelter, and to purchase equipment and supplies for the kitchen and technology center. Product donations needed for Luke's Kitchen include towels, paper products, trash bags, laundry detergent, non-perishable food items, and new or gently-used kitchen supplies. *m*



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inspiredwomanonline.com



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