

# Inspired Woman

GENEROSITY



**GOODNESS AND LIGHT**

**OH MAN:  
SANTA JERRY**

**CALLED TO 25  
DAYS OF GIVING**

**DECEMBER 2017  
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*Kayla  
McCloud*  
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# Contents

**Give, and it will be given to you.**  
**Luke 6:38**



**11 Generosity: Deeper Than Pockets**  
*by Beth Anderson*

**12 Called to 25 Days of Giving**  
*by Stephanie Fong*

**14 Look What She Did**

**16 Give a Donation to Save a Life**  
*by Kylie Blanchard*

**18 Wheels for Work**  
*by Tracie Bettenhausen*

**20 COVER STORY:**  
**Kayla McCloud**  
*A Matching Gift*

**26 Your Last Supper**  
*by Arika Johnson*

**28 Goodness and Light**  
*by Amber (Schatz) Danks*

**31 Fill Your Cup: Start With Self-Care**  
*by Dr. Stephanie Nishek, ND, CLEC*

**32 Trending: Contributing to the Social Media Solution, Not the Noise**  
*by Michelle Farnsworth*

**34 Oh Man**  
*Because Guys Inspire Too!*

**36 Second Generation Generosity**

**38 Happy to Share Holiday Favorites**  
*by Pam Vukelic*

**42 Community Contributor**  
*Ronald McDonald House Charities*

**44 When Flying Was Fun**  
*by Carole Hemingway*

**WEST  
DAKOTA**

**FOX**

**NEWS at NINE**

**YOURNEWSLEADER.COM**



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**WATCH WEEKDAYS AT 9:00PM**



# Editors' Notes



Years ago, my daughter Morgan, now eight, told me in a very serious voice, "It's better to give than to receipt." While she didn't quite have the saying down, she knew what she meant, and so did I. I've always loved searching for the perfect gift for my kids, and I've apparently passed that on to them. They've already started their lists of what they'll buy each other, and each year the excitement when someone opens a gift they've picked out is contagious. They've figured out that it truly is better to give than to "receipt."

I have been reminded of that as we worked on this issue, with our theme generosity. The people featured this month are all fantastic examples of generosity. Our covergirl, Kayla McCloud, generously gave a kidney to a cousin who needed it. She didn't think twice, she just gave. Others generously and faithfully give blood to

save the lives of people they've never met. And Pam Vukelic has generously shared some simple recipes to help make sharing holiday goodies a little easier, and a lot more fun, this Christmas season.

There's a saying I saved on a Pinterest board long ago, *Generosity: the habit of giving freely without expecting anything in return*. It's a good reminder for me to do good, to be nice, and to be generous always. This issue has reminded me of the good in the world, and inspired me to be generous with the gifts God has blessed me with. I pray this issue will do the same for you.

Merry Christmas!

Jody



Whether you've spoken it or heard it, you know this statement: *Actions speak louder than words*. While I agree, I also love words—spoken and written. Reading this month's issue confirms for me how much power our words can hold. Words are necessary to share the stories of how people lift and celebrate others.

I've been especially inspired by the articles our writers share this month. They are stories about acts of generosity, but pay close attention to the words of generosity that are shared, too.

As co-owner of this magazine, I have been the witness and recipient of many forms of generosity, particularly those that come in the form of words. It makes me smile every time a man tells me how much he "loves reading our little books."

Readers also comment often, "I read every issue cover-to-cover." If you haven't done it yet, this is one issue to read cover-to-cover. You will discover that generosity can be a tradition shared as a family. Your donation can be blood—or a vehicle. Share your time. Share your recipes. Share kind words on social media. And don't forget to be generous with yourself for the sake of your well-being.

Yes, actions speak louder than words. But when one has the privilege to share words about inspiring acts of generosity, nothing is louder. Nothing is more meaningful. I hope this issue brings you the gifts of inspiration, joy, and peace, and ideas for your own acts—and words—of generosity.

Marci

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

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# Generosity:

## MUCH DEEPER THAN POCKETS

by Beth Anderson

This time of year, encouraging generosity usually goes with the territory. Mailers invite year-end gifts to charity. Donation boxes collect toys, food, and winter gear for families in need. And news outlets (hopefully) begin to share stories of people inspired by the Christmas spirit: stories of golden coins showing up in Salvation Army kettles, of anonymous gifts appearing from unnamed givers, and of hot lattes paid for by a stranger. These seemingly random acts of kindness and generosity inspire hope and encourage us all to be a little better at being human.

Lately, however, rather than inspiring generosity, it seems the stories we share most urge us to edge our lives with yellow CAUTION tape—cordonning us off from the uncertainties of life:

*Be aware of stranger danger. Fear those you don't know or don't understand. Be suspicious until you are certain you can trust, and even then be careful.*

Admonishments like these have become the moral of the story.

CAUTION tape around our lives may create the illusion of safety, but it really only fosters a circle of isolation. It doesn't resonate with the beauty and richness rooted deep within community. Remember, our world is a place where gold coins *do* show up in kettles, where beautifully wrapped gifts *do* appear, and where paying it forward is a joy I want my children to experience. Our small acts and the stories we share with one another matter.

British playwright and humanitarian Tom Stoppard once said, "Obviously, you would give your life for your children, or give them the last biscuit on the plate. But

*to me the trick in life is to take that sense of generosity between kin, make it apply to the extended family and to your neighbor, your village and beyond."* Perhaps the most significant thing we can share this season is a spirit of courageous generosity and kindness that extends beyond our family.

Generosity begins with sharing whatever we have. You may not possess a windfall of cash to change the course of someone's life, but we are each gifted with something to share—a kind word, some time to listen, an able body to help out, a small token conveying deep love. Science shows that something as simple as reading the word "love" is enough to cause people to be more compassionate (Google the Greater Good Science Center). It doesn't take a scientific study to prove that sharing time, resources, and self with others is good for the heart, soul, and community. The warmth experienced when someone shares a bit of their life with us is witness enough to the power of generosity.

This season, I'm keeping my eyes open for stories that speak of good in the world, of human connection, and of people surprising one another with generosity. Hopefully, my actions will come to reflect a bit of the generosity I learn from others. What stories will you share this season? *TW*

*"Writer and Fighter" by Tim Adams, The Observer, September 20, 2008*



*Beth Anderson is a deacon 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.*





# CALLED TO 25 DAYS OF GIVING

by Stephanie Fong | Submitted Photos



Sitting at her desk at work six years ago, social worker Kristin Seaks of Dickinson was struck by a thought that has shaped the month of December for her family ever since.

"This idea of '25 Days of Giving' popped into my head. I did some research online. Does this exist? Where have I seen this before? I couldn't find anything."

Kristin pondered the thought, trying to figure out what the message was. It didn't take her long to decide that from December 1 through 25, her family could share their time, talent, or treasures.

Her husband, Brent, was skeptical when she told him her idea.

"I was a slow convert," he admits, recalling how busy life felt with children, then ages two, three, and 18. "It wasn't that I thought it was a bad idea, it just seemed that it was such a busy time of the year already."

But Kristin was sure their family was meant to pursue the call to more purposefully give.

"I told him, 'I've already started a list.' We dove in," she says.

## THE FIRST YEAR

The family worked to give of their time, talent, or treasure each day. They made donations to the Amen Food Pantry, The Arc of Dickinson, and Oreo's Animal Rescue. They took the time to drop off unused eyeglasses at the local Lions Club. Donating blood, shoveling snow for neighbors, sharing home-baked goods, and caroling at local nursing homes were also part of their December.

Most special to Kristin were the activities that meant something extra special to their family. They participated in the Wreaths Across America program at the Veterans Cemetery in Mandan—volunteers help place Christmas wreaths on the gravestones of veterans, one of which belonged to Kristin's dad.

"It does make you focus on what Christmas is about, and not getting so

caught up in commercialism,” Kristin explains. “What’s nice to see with our kids is they don’t know anything different! In our family, December has always been 25 Days of Giving.”

“What I realized looking back is how much I needed this. It literally helped me refocus on what was important. Advent is about getting ready for Christ. It made me think about others each day,” Brent reflects.

## INVOLVING KIDS

As the Seaks’ kids grew older, they added their efforts and ideas to the family calendar.

Olivia, now eight, enjoys caroling the most. Rhett, age nine, enjoyed helping someone on the side of the road near Walmart last year.

“We gave him the groceries we had just bought.”

Though oldest daughter Kurra, now 24, was in college when the tradition started, she participates with a lot of the family’s activities, such as giving to people in other countries through Lutheran World Relief.

“During the oil boom, the kids and I would drive around looking for anyone on the street who looked cold and would offer them hot cocoa and coffee,” Brent remembers. “What has been great about this tradition is being a witness to your kids. They see how blessed they are, and they start to look for ways to give to others without us prompting them.”

## THE TRADITION GROWS

To help family and friends see what they were working on, Kristin started a 25 Days of Giving Facebook page. The page gradually grew more likes; friends from Dickinson, Minneapolis, Washington, and even someone doing mission work in Eastern Europe started giving more mindfully during the month of December.

This year, the Seaks are working harder to involve more families, inviting them to enjoy a time of fellowship while they serve others.

“Rhett thought it would be great if we could get 25 families to participate in 25 Days of Giving this year,” Kristin says. “So we’re putting our best effort forward to spread the word. We’ve had a few planning meetings discussing what we could do to make a greater impact on the community this year.”

She gives the example of donating blood.

“What if instead of two pints of blood being donated by Brent and myself, we were able to collectively donate several gallons of blood through encouraging others to join in?”

Based on input from their group planning meetings, Kristin developed a calendar of suggested giving activities in 2017, which is posted on the Facebook page. Anyone is encouraged to participate, whether in Dickinson or in another community.

“Having a calendar of planned activities has been really helpful to us. It gives a guideline so we did not feel overwhelmed and aren’t scrambling to come up with an idea each day,” Brent points out. But we also have some flexibility—we can always move snow!”

Kristin and Brent encourage anyone looking to participate in 25 Days of Giving to simply consider their own talents and gifts, as well as their family’s schedule and finances.

“Do what works for you. Do what you think you can manage,” suggests Kristin. “If every day does not work for you, but weekends are your family time, that’s great.

“This is our December. Whatever the message was [that I received six years ago], I think we were just supposed to go with it, and we have wholeheartedly gone with it,” says Kristin.

Learn more: search 25 Days of Giving on Facebook. *W*



*Stephanie Fong lives in Dickinson with her husband, Carter, daughter Sydney, and son, Parker. Originally from Powers Lake, North Dakota, she has lived in southwestern North Dakota for over a decade.*



## ALICE BERNING

Alice Berning is a painter and her canvas comes in many shapes: pumpkins, gourds, even cookies.

"I started painting on pumpkins and such in 1985. I just wanted to give people something, to spread a little happiness," explains Alice.

From there, her canvas grew, but pumpkins are still her favorite. Every fall, Alice stocks up on pumpkins at local farmers' markets, paints quirky faces on them, tops them with a flower, and then gives them away. Each pumpkin she paints includes her signature ladybug.

"Everything I make has a ladybug. When kids see my work, the first thing they do is look for the ladybug, not at what I painted! If I forget a ladybug they let me know," says Alice with a smile.

Each pumpkin takes about 30 minutes to complete. One year, Alice painted 350 pumpkins. She paints each pumpkin individually; there's no assembly line to her work. She happily gives away most of her work, but each year she sells her paintings at the annual craft sale at Bismarck's St. Mary's Grade School.

At age 83, Alice says she is busier than she's ever been, and has no plans to slow down or stop painting anytime soon. A musician by trade—she has a doctorate in music education and taught at the collegiate level—her hands are now stained with paint, a look she says suits her just fine.



## SUZY RUMMEL

Suzy Rummel comes from a big family. Huge, as she says.

"I have nine brothers and sisters, five kids of my own, and lots of nieces and nephews," says Suzy.

And for Suzy, family is everything. She has dedicated her life to raising her kids, but as they started growing up, she started looking for more to do. She became a Mary Kay sales director, started volunteering, and worked as a receptionist for her nephew's business. But Suzy wanted more.

"I'm used to doing five things at once!"

So after years of listening to her seven sisters talk about their fabric stashes and quilts they make, Suzy had an idea. She would open a quilt shop in Richardton, North Dakota, population: roughly 600. The idea quickly grew to be much more than just a quilt shop.

"The closest quilt shops are in Dickinson, Hettinger, and Bismarck. I wanted something closer to home," explains Suzy. "I have a niece who studied horticulture and wanted to open a flower shop, so we did. I love coffee and my daughter suggested we add a coffee shop. And then I thought, why not add lunch too? So we do a daily lunch special of soup and sandwich. It's a little bit of everything."

Suzy also offers homemade and unique gifts, as well as quilting and sewing classes. Learn more on their website, [www.suzysstash.com](http://www.suzysstash.com) or follow them on Facebook.



#nowords  
J. Wachter



## JESSICA WACHTER

Jessica Wachter knew when she started art classes in the third grade at Solheim Elementary in Bismarck that she wanted to grow up to be an artist. Through years of continued classes, including a fine arts degree from NDSU in Fargo, her parents offered constant encouragement for her to follow her passion.

"That first class I took sparked something in me and I just ran with it," she says. "I knew from then on I wanted to do something in the creative field. Now as an adult, I feel privileged to make this my career, to share my passion with so many people. I genuinely feel this is my calling and don't see it as work, even though the days and nights can be very long. I wake up every morning ready to get back in the studio!"

At 31, Jessica has become a na-

tionally-recognized artist, having her work shown from Florida to Arizona to California. January through March, she will be featured in the annual Scottsdale Celebration of Fine Art, sharing her work with tens of thousands of visitors.

However, you don't have to travel the country to find Jessica's remarkable art. She is in the midst of her first Bismarck showing, #NoWords solo exhibition in The Capital Gallery, downtown Bismarck. With pieces from 10 inch square to 10 feet high, the gallery has been transformed by the beauty and diversity of her expressive art.

The exhibition runs through December 31 at The Capital Gallery, 109 N. 4 Street. More details may be found at [TheCapitalGallery.com](http://TheCapitalGallery.com), on Facebook, or by calling 701-751-1698.

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# GIVE A Donation TO SAVE A LIFE

by Kylie Blanchard | Submitted Photos

While making a donation at United Blood Services can have a significant impact on the lives, treatments, and recoveries of accident victims, cancer patients, burn victims, and transplant recipients, the need for additional donations remains great.

"There are a lot of people you can help with a simple donation," says Ana Hernandez-Miller, telerecruiter with United Blood Services in Bismarck. "It is a huge impact."

**Red Blood Cells:** blood transfusions, trauma and burn patients

**Platelets:** cancer, heart, and burn patients

**Plasma:** trauma and transplant patients, rare blood disorders

It is estimated only around five percent of those who can donate do so, she says.

"There are days we don't have enough donations coming through our doors. Donors are able to provide red cell donations, platelets, plasma, or a combination of all three as a whole blood donation. We need everything and we need it all the time."

While it is dependent on the donor, Ana says one whole blood donation can benefit two to three individuals, and a red blood cell donation can reach two to four people. In addition, one patient's need for platelets can reach up to six units per week.

Joletta Vetter has been donating platelets at United Blood Services for nearly 15 years, starting at the urging of a co-worker.

"A mobile donation unit was going to be at my work and I was challenged by a co-worker. I did it and have been donating ever since," Joletta recalls.

An individual is eligible to donate platelets every seven days, up to 24 times per year, and Joletta says she donates as often as possible.

"I am right in town and am now retired, so I tell them if they need me, I will be there. I've never made an appointment."

She says she donates platelets because of the impact it has on others and she encourages individuals to consider donating as well.

"Everyone who has cancer or heart disease needs platelets, and I can provide them. There are so many people that can't donate, the ones that can, should. It's easy and you feel good when you are done."

Ana says donors do have to meet the health history requirements listed on a questionnaire, as well as pass a check of



their hemoglobin, blood pressure, and medications.

"Your eligibility is determined by your health and medications," she notes.

Walk-ins are welcome for whole blood donations, but Ana recommends making an appointment for platelet and plasma donations, as those donations are done with automated machines.

"We do our best to inform and prepare donors," says Ana, adding donors are encouraged to hydrate well and eat a good meal prior to donating. "They should also take it easy after their donation. There really are very few side effects."

United Blood Services also runs monthly promotions, making individuals eligible for prizes just for showing up to donate.

The holiday season is a time of great

need at United Blood Services, notes Ana.

"There are more people traveling and unfortunately more accidents. Our donations go down, but our needs go up."

She says the local blood bank can also be impacted by catastrophic events throughout the country, and donations during these times are also greatly needed.

"You are investing a little time, but you are investing in the lives of others," says Ana. "You are extending or saving lives. Donation is a simple, quick way to help your community and give back. It's a lifesaving gift." *M*

(LEFT)  
Deborah  
Vollmuth is loyal  
platelet donor.

(RIGHT)  
Serena Doecke  
is a whole blood  
donor.



*Kylie Blanchard is a local writer and editor, and busy mom of three, who enjoys both staying active with her family and the chance to just sit and read a great book.*

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# WHEELS FOR WORK:

## HAND OVER THE KEYS (TO SOMEONE IN NEED)

by Tracie Bettenhausen | Submitted Photos



Sarah Carlson,  
CCO executive  
director



When's the last time your car was in the shop for a few days? You might've had to have your spouse drive you to work, or have a co-worker drop you off at the shop to pick it up.

If you have kids, maybe you had to have your parents loan you a car so you could play chauffeur.

We rely on our wheels, to get us to work, school, and daycare. Imagine not having that convenience. In most cases, having a car is practically a necessity to keeping our jobs.

The Wheels for Work program helps give vehicles to people who can't afford to get one on their own. CCO, Inc., the charity partner at Community Options, runs a program that accepts used vehicles and gives them to people who need them.

Sarah Carlson, CCO executive director, says a car can be the one possession that gets a family back on its feet.

"We give vehicles to people who are employed, working on getting employed, or going to school so they can be employed," she says. "When people are constantly struggling with transportation to hold down a job, they can't focus on everything else they need to do to be successful."

Sarah says Wheels for Work is meant to help people who are on the path to self-sufficiency.

"They are taking steps to controlling their life. Being able to work is empowering," Sarah explains. "Some circumstances are out of people's control: their health or the health of a child could be bad, maybe a domestic abuse situation

forced a client to leave everything behind. We receive referrals from other agencies who connect us with people in need."

She says one of her recent clients is a woman who is going to school to be a certified nursing assistant.

"A lot of jobs like that are shift work. We do have the bus in town, and it's great we have public transportation, but the hours the bus runs are not helpful for shift workers. The earliest routes begin at 7 a.m. and end early in the evening," Sarah says. "If you have a child to drop off at daycare, you can see how that system is not going to be helpful to you. An owned vehicle gives you the independence you need."

Another client was a family who had two foster children, and were asked to take in another four children to keep the siblings together.

"So, suddenly this was a family of six kids. We were able to get them a van and make their circumstances much more manageable," Sarah says.

CCO partners with Missouri Slope Areawide United Way and The Bush Foundation for funding, in addition to fundraising channels. Sarah says CCO also partners with local car dealers and mechanic shops, who donate vehicles, or fix them up for free or at a reduced rate.

"I really call myself a professional beggar," she says. "I have never had a single business turn me down when I ask for help. Getting to see the generosity of this community is one of my greatest joys."

Wheels for Work has been donating cars since December 31, 2013; they have

Visit [ccoinc.net](http://ccoinc.net) if you're interested in donating a car to the Wheels for Work program.

matched 54 vehicles with recipients in that time. Sarah says they could match many more, and encourages people to donate rather than sell their used cars.

Those who donate their car to CCO get the maximum tax write-off. When a donated vehicle is too far beyond repair, Sarah sends it to Johnson's Wrecking, where the car is scrapped and CCO is given cash.

"The money then goes toward repairing another vehicle," she says.

Sarah says her best days are the days she is able to turn over the keys to a new car owner.

"These people cry, it means so much to them," she says. "In many cases, they don't own anything before this, and now they have the title to a vehicle in their name. That is a powerful moment, and can be difficult to imagine until you put yourself in their shoes." *M*



*Tracie Bettenhausen is a senior staff writer/editor at Basin Electric. She has generously opened her home to two once-foster, now-adopted kitties, Basil and Sweet Pea.*



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GIFT CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE

# Kayla McCloud

## A MATCHING GIFT

by Jody Kerzman | Photography: Photos by Jacy





*"Freely you received, freely give."*

—Matthew 10:8

Kayla McCloud was raised on those words. In her family, helping others and giving to those in need was expected. So when Kayla got word her cousin Carla Bock might need a kidney transplant, Kayla didn't think twice.

"I immediately offered to be tested," recalls Kayla. "In the back of my head I always thought I'd do it if someone in my family needed one. She was the one."

## **FAMILY HISTORY**

Kayla's family has a history of Polycystic Kidney Disease (PKD), an inherited disorder in which clusters of cysts develop primarily within the kidneys. Over time, this causes the kidneys to enlarge and lose function. The disease runs in families, which is why Carla's need for a kidney didn't surprise Kayla.

"My dad's mom had PKD and three of her five kids inherited the disease. My dad didn't, which meant since he didn't have PKD, my brothers and I wouldn't either. That also meant we might be good kidney donors one day."

Kidney donation also runs in her family. In 1989, Kayla's dad, Tom Kaczynski, donated a kidney to his sister Rosemary. Nearly 30 years later, Kayla donated a kidney to her cousin Carla, who happens to be Rosemary's daughter.

"I remember my dad donating to his sister," says Kayla. "I was in fifth grade. My mom stayed home with us and I remember the neighbors helping with chores while he was gone. I just remember he was gone for the transplant and then home to recover."

Kayla's donation was nearly two years in the planning, starting in August 2015 when Carla's doctors told her it was time to think about a transplant.

"I knew the time was coming; it wasn't a surprise," recalls Carla, who lives in Wisconsin. "We were watching my numbers, the level of blood toxicity of the body. Normal is 0.6 to 1.1. Mine was hitting three to four and I knew it was coming. I had gone to visit my relatives, including Kayla's parents, in North Dakota. I told

them the time was coming. I didn't know when, but I knew it was now a matter of *when*, not *if* I'd need a kidney. I wasn't begging for a kidney, I just wanted them to know what was happening."

Kayla's mom, Linda Kaczynski, not only emailed her children, but also volunteered to donate one of her kidneys. Three people—Linda, Kayla, and another cousin—all went through testing. Kayla says the testing started with bloodwork at her doctor's office in Bismarck which was then sent to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota for more tests. Doctors there called Kayla and asked her to come to Mayo for additional testing. She and her husband made the trip in November 2015.

"I underwent three days of testing," recalls Kayla. "When the testing was done, we headed home. We had only gotten to Minneapolis when we got the call from the surgeons that I was a match."

In fact, all three relatives who underwent the testing were matches for Carla. But of the three, Kayla was the closest match. Kayla, then 37, was also the youngest donor, which Carla says was another reason her doctors wanted Kayla's kidney.

## **DONATION DELAYS**

But it would be nearly two years before the transplant would actually happen.

"It was a lot of 'hurry up and wait,'" says Carla.

Shortly after doctors determined Kayla was a match, Carla discovered she needed a different surgery first.

"I had open heart surgery when I was five years old. I didn't know my heart valve would eventually need to be replaced," she explains. "I was always tired, but I always blamed that on my kidneys. Turns out my heart was to blame."

The valve replacement actually improved Carla's kidney function, so the kidney transplant was postponed.

"Plus, I was still gaining strength and recovering from the heart surgery. I didn't want to have another surgery and go backward in my recovery," says Carla. "It was the best decision for my body and for

Kayla. I didn't want to get her kidney and then have complications."

By this time, it was February 2017. Because of the amount of time that had passed since the original test that confirmed Kayla as a match, surgeons wanted to test her again. That testing led to yet another setback. This time, it was Kayla's health that put the transplant on hold.

"They did a CT scan of my kidneys to check for kidney stones and ended up finding a cyst on my ovary," recalls Kayla.

Her OB-GYN in Bismarck was able to remove the cyst. After the cyst was removed and tested Kayla was once again approved to donate a kidney to her cousin. The transplant was set for June 21, 2017.

### **DONATION DAY**

"Of course before they did the surgery, there was more testing," says Kayla. "There was a chance we could have been sent home without having surgery."

Much to the relief of both women, they passed the tests and were cleared for surgery on June 21. The two were in the same operating room, side by side; Carla's bad kidneys were removed, Kayla's good kidney was removed, and transplanted into Carla's body.

"My surgery took only about two hours," says Kayla. "The first thing I remember is the surgeons coming into my room and telling me what a beautiful kidney I had."

"I just don't remember surgery being a big deal but I woke up in ICU and in my head that was wrong. I thought I should be on the same floor as Kayla," says Carla. "They explained to me because they took my native kidneys, I had to be in ICU. Your native kidneys know how to regulate your blood pressure. This new kidney wasn't doing that yet and my blood pressure dropped dangerously low. I didn't anticipate that and I remember thinking I was going backward."

Carla spent just over a day in the ICU, and then three days in the hospital; that's standard procedure for transplant recipients. She then went to the Gift of

Life Transplant House in Rochester for two weeks before going home. Kayla was in the hospital for just two days.

"My kidney was working right away for Carla so that was a great feeling. It was hard to hear about other families whose transplants didn't work immediately," remembers Kayla.

### **RECOVERING**

It's been just over five months since the transplant, and both women say the road to recovery has been relatively easy.

"It's hard to explain because I never felt bad, but I didn't realize how sick I was. I never looked sick either. I had a belly because my kidneys were so big they were pushing my belly out. I knew I was tired but I went to work with a smile on my face," explains Carla. "But at our four-month post-op appointment, I realized how much better my body is working now. Before the surgery, we did a 24-hour urine test; Kayla pumped out more than four liters and I barely got a liter. At our post-op, I still didn't get as much as Kayla, but I got over three liters. My body just wasn't functioning before."

It wasn't functioning because Carla's kidneys were too large to work properly.

"My kidneys were 11 inches long; healthy kidneys should be the size of your fist. I was carrying around footballs when I should have been carrying baseballs," explains Carla. "My kidneys weighed eight pounds; I got rid of 16 liters worth of fluids in the first two days with Kayla's kidney."

Removing those enlarged kidneys has also eased what was once constant back pain for Carla.

"I had back pain for years. We're talking severe back pain. I didn't go to bed without taking pain meds because if I did, I wouldn't sleep. I knew it was due to my kidney issues. I haven't had a backache since the transplant. It's really awesome."

Carla's recovery is going remarkably well, and while slower than she'd like, so is Kayla's.

"I was off of work for eight weeks, and even now, there are days where my energy just isn't there. But the doctors say that's normal," admits Kayla. "My creatinine

levels will always be up and the kidney I have left is growing to compensate for the missing kidney. Certain foods don't agree with me, but I'm adapting. The scar from the incisions is uncomfortable sometimes too."

Kayla has three scars on her stomach: two small ones and one larger one that looks much like a C-section scar.

"They warned me about those before surgery. They asked me if I'd be okay with scars on my stomach. I joked that I never wore a bikini before and I'm not about to start now so it's all good," she laughs. "But it took me a long time to actually look at the scar. I didn't know what to expect and I guess I was a little scared. I made my husband check to make sure it was healing correctly."

The good news is the scars are healing. They will always be there though, a reminder of the gift Kayla so unselfishly gave to her cousin.

Kayla will do yearly bloodwork in Bismarck; Carla will go to Mayo for yearly checkups, and knows the signs which

would indicate her body may be rejecting the kidney. This month she will turn 50, and knows thanks to Kayla, she will have many more birthdays.

"It could add as much as 25 years to my life without dialysis," says Carla. "Kayla's donation to me is extremely special. There is a lot of emotion to it because her dad gave to my mom 30 years ago. He was the first gift. The generosity of it is insane. Asking for a kidney was very difficult; to ask someone to make their life worse to make mine better was really hard. But Kayla didn't hesitate for a second.

"Our family has grown up with PKD. We watched our parents give and receive kidneys, and I think we all just thought that if they could do it, so could we. But generosity is a learned behavior, one that Kayla learned from her parents. It's just insane to be on the receiving side of such a generous gift."

#### **MORE DONATIONS NEEDED**

While their story is a familiar one in their family, Kayla and Carla know that



“

"It's just insane to be on the receiving side of such a generous gift."

—Carla Bock





many other people are not aware of just how common kidney failure is, or that oftentimes it could be prevented with a donor kidney.

According to the Mayo Clinic, on any given day about 100,000 people are waiting for a kidney transplant. About 5,000 people die each year while waiting for a kidney.

"It's crazy to me to think about how many people die because they don't get a donor," says Carla. "Many people are not as lucky as I am to have family to turn to. I'm in a support group and I have friends who have been waiting years and years and years for a kidney.

"It is the greatest gift a person can give. Thanks to Kayla's unselfish gift, I should be able to see my daughter get married one day and have children. Without the transplant I don't know that I would. It's a reminder to me to be open and to be there for others that might need you."

Still, Kayla says what she did was "no big deal." She's focused on sharing her story in hopes that more people will sign

up to be a kidney donor. She's trying to convince her husband to start the process, and she's confident her daughters, now ages 12 and 10, will one day do the same if given the chance to help someone.

"When people say, 'you did a heroic thing,' I don't think it really is. It's just something our family does. We help others," says Kayla, humbly. "Anything to improve her quality of life is worth it and I look at it that they wouldn't do it if it was going to mess up my health. It's a safe procedure."

Since donating her kidney, Kayla has crossed paths with many people who have received or given a kidney.

"I feel like a member of a very special club," she says. "Everyone knows someone who has been affected. I've met many of those people since this process started more than two years ago."

It's a process that has connected these cousins in a very special way, and reaffirmed in Kayla the importance of giving.

"If I had more kidneys, I'd do it again. Without a doubt," says Kayla. *TM*

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"If I had more kidneys, I'd do it again. Without a doubt."  
—Kayla McCloud



Submitted Photo.



Kayla and  
cousin Carla



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# MAKE TIME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

3 STEPS FOR FITTING GENEROSITY INTO YOUR SCHEDULE

With so many things vying for your attention—family, work, school, church activities and more—it's easy to understand why you might struggle to make room for giving back.

Taking these three steps can help you make time for the things you value most:

## **Step 1: Evaluate your commitments**

Take an inventory of your daily, weekly and monthly commitments, considering seasonal or yearly activities as well. Don't forget about social obligations and hobbies.

Then ask yourself:

- What am I passionate about?
- What am I committing to out of guilt?
- What can I delegate or relinquish responsibility for?
- Which commitments support my values, dreams and goals?

## **Step 2: Find your passion**

Becoming generous with your time becomes easier when you're doing what you love. Where do you want to volunteer? Whom do you want to serve? Find a cause you care about and get involved.

## **Step 3: Pencil It In**

Once you've found your passion, search for service opportunities in your community and add them to your schedule right away. If it's on your calendar, you'll be less likely to forget about the commitment, overschedule or double book.

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# YOUR LAST MEAL

by Arika Johnson

If you knew you were about to eat your last meal, what would you choose to have served?

In the spring of 1996, I ventured to my grandparent's home in north Fargo, a six mile walk from the campus of Concordia College. When I walked into the house, my grandmother was sitting peacefully at the kitchen table overlooking a picturesque window. She was engulfed by the peace of the blue jays eating the seed that Grandpa placed religiously in the feeder every morning. As I joined my grandmother, she quietly got up from the table, walked into her bedroom, and brought back a photo album. She began sharing with me the stories of my ancestors, showing me photographs, sharing

with me the details of my Norwegian ancestors immigrating to the United States.

She spoke to me about our similarities. The photos revealed a link that connected history to the present, and at that moment, with my grandmother, I felt a belongingness I had never realized before. A strength and a love for a generation past that instilled hope for the future. I felt connected.

As I talked with my grandmother, Grandpa began setting the table and preparing multiple place settings in the expectation that others would be joining us for dinner. Truthfully, I wasn't expecting dinner and was preparing to hike back to campus. However, my



grandfather had different plans. After setting the table, he quickly dialed multiple telephone numbers on his rotary telephone. One by one he invited family and neighbors to our table for dinner—last minute, no expectations. “Just come as you are,” he said.

Before I knew it, the table was full of people that were important to my grandparents—neighbors, my aunt and uncle, my cousins.

Dinner that evening opened with a common Norwegian table prayer; we crossed our arms and held each other's hands, squeezing ever so softly as if to pass strength to one another. After the table prayer, Grandpa welcomed everyone, said a few short words, and began to pass the simple, but warm Midwestern food around to each person. Conversations began; we laughed and raised our water glasses to toast life's simplicities.

Little did I know, that would be the last supper I'd share with my grandparents, Harry and Helen Syvertson.

Looking back, I can't remember what exactly we ate. Instead, I remember the people at the table, the sounds of laughter, of food being enjoyed, the “come as you are” spontaneity of the simple act of sharing a meal together after a busy work day. I remember and relish in the warmth and in the love of that late afternoon spring day.

From that moment on I've ventured out to soak in life's simplicities. A shared meal. A simple, yet memorable event enjoyed not by the food that we eat, but instead celebrated by the presence of the people at our table.

Time is our most precious of commodities. Who we choose to celebrate that time with is the most important decision that we as human beings are privileged to make. The next time you sit down at your table, ask yourself this question:

Who would join me at this table if this were my last supper? Think about your response and make a promise to bring that moment to fruition. Truly, it will become one of the most precious moments of your life and will inspire you for years to come. *M*



*A native of Bismarck, North Dakota, Arika Johnson now calls Devils Lake, North Dakota home. She lives there with her twin five-year-old boys, Anders and Espenn, and her husband and number one cheerleader, Paul.*

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# GOODNESS & LIGHT

by Amber (Schatz) Danks | Submitted Photos

If you've seen the "Lights on Chestnut" in a neighborhood southeast of Bismarck, you know how special it is. What you may not know, is the story behind the spectacular Christmas light show.

For 11 years, dueling Christmas displays across the street from each other have been a friendly brother-sister competition. No winner is ever crowned between siblings Greg Wilz and Gigi Wilz, but hundreds of children and adults get to be dazzled by the colorful lights and music they have created during the holidays. On a good year, the homeowners have counted up to 20,000 vehicles stopping by to take in the show.

This year, there will be an even bigger audience.

The Wilz families, Gigi and Davina and Greg and Sharon, will be featured nationally on an upcoming episode of "The Great Christmas Light Fight."

The ABC show is a holiday decorating competition series. The reality show features people decorating their homes to compete for a cash prize and trophy. The Wilz families have been doing this—just for fun—for years, before the series was even on the air.

Gigi says ABC reached out to them to be on the show, but they were hesitant

right away.

"We've always talked about, 'did you watch it, what did you think?' in part of our banter back and forth, but never said, 'we should do that, or try, or audition,'" explains Gigi. "It wasn't until they came to us; the last thing we wanted to do was portray something for the show. It's not about competing for money or a trophy. It was about being able to show what North Dakota does."

What North Dakota does, is step up to help.

In May 2015, Gigi became the first female general of the North Dakota National Guard. She was deployed to Bosnia during December 2015 and 2016, missing out on the elaborate lights setup, which includes computers, music, and thousands of homemade lights.

Gigi was supposed to be home for setting up lights this year, but responded to Puerto Rico to help following Hurricane Maria. "The Great Christmas Light Fight" production crew instead filmed with Davina, Greg, and Sharon, plus 300 family, friends, neighbors, and military members—including the Patriot Guard—who pitched in to make sure the show would go on.

"To me, it's so much about community.

Not only will I think, 'Oh my God, I owe these people so much,' to make sure what we do is a community effort for the last couple years, it's about a whole bunch of people getting together and giving back to the community," says Gigi.

Gigi, Davina, and Greg have strong military backgrounds, which has also helped in coordinating the immense volunteer effort.

"I attribute that to Davina. People have recognized how much Davina has given to the community, the Patriot Guard, or the relationship with all the Gold Star families. I attribute a lot of it to that," says Gigi.

"We are a military neighborhood and out of the 10 years of the display, five of those years someone in the neighborhood has had a family member deployed in service to our country," Davina shares. "The generosity of this community has been the unwavering support of service members, families, veterans, and fallen families. There is nothing more recognizable as the pride this community shows and how military service touches nearly every family.

"But the light show has an amazing support system behind the scenes. Gigi has been deployed the past three holiday seasons, but we had the generosity of family and friends to assist with assembling of the display, and support of the neighborhood. For 35 days while preparing this year's display for ABC's 'Great Christmas Light Fight' contest, they were diligent with their efforts and selfless with their time. This Christmas display is a treasure that we feel we can give our community and is most definitely a labor of love."

Millions of people will enjoy that labor of love this year—in person and on TV. The lights went on for the season on the Friday after Thanksgiving. Spectators will enjoy 500,000 lights this year—200,000 more than last season. There are also two new pieces that Gigi and Greg welded together: a blue tree made of stars, and the word "believe" over the garage.

"No matter what, we try to stay traditional. 'I believe' is handed down for

generations about the spirit of Christmas; you can call it whatever you want, but it transcends religion, belief in something," says Gigi.

Last Christmas was a slower year for traffic at the "Lights on Chestnut." Gigi says that's likely due to blizzards and bad roads. With excitement surrounding the ABC show, and a chance to see what dozens of volunteers have helped put together while Gigi was deployed, this Christmas season might be extra special.

"The years I was home for it, before Bosnia, it was such a panic. The Friday

(LEFT TO RIGHT)  
Davina, "Great  
Christmas Light  
Fight" host,  
Taniya Nayak,  
Greg, and Sharon



Season Five of "The Great Christmas Light Fight" premieres Monday, December 4 on ABC.

See the "Lights on Chestnut" weeknights 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. weekends 5:30 p.m. to 11 p.m.

after Thanksgiving no matter what, that really became a panic time. Why do we do this to ourselves every year? But then [the lights] come on and you start to hear the stories of wedding engagements or family time, and that's when I get the shivers. It's really about seeing other people's reactions," says Gigi. *M*



*Amber (Schatz) Danks spent nearly 12 years as a news reporter, producer, and anchor. She is currently tackling her toughest and most rewarding assignment yet: being a stay-home mom to her baby girl.*





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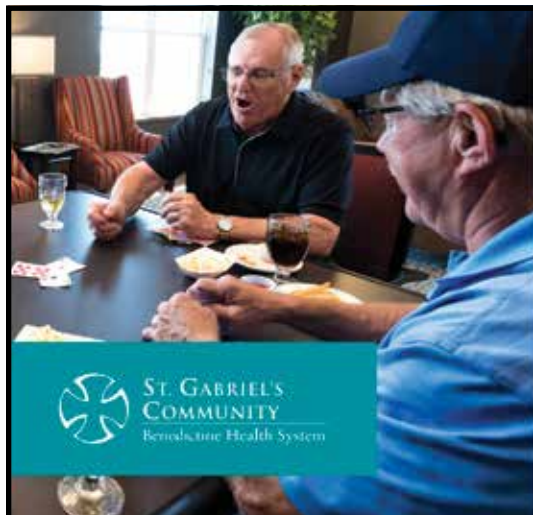
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# FILL YOUR CUP:

## START WITH SELF-CARE

by Dr. Stephanie Nishek, ND, CLEC

The holiday season has a way of sneaking up on us. It's done it again this year. Hustle and bustle are already noticeable in the air, along with the familiar winter chill the season brings to us in North Dakota. As we prepare for the "Season of Giving," it is the perfect time to hunker down for a minute and think about self-care strategies. One may wonder, if 'tis better to give than receive, wouldn't self-care be considered receiving and be contradictory to the spirit of the season? I would implore you to shift that perspective by considering the adage, "You cannot pour from an empty cup."

If we seek to live generously, which is defined as *showing a readiness to give more of something than is strictly necessary or expected*, then taking care of the aspects of our lives that allow us to give freely quickly grows in importance. Here are three ways, both typical and unconventional, to keep your 'cup' from running dry:

**1. Buffer Your Stress.** Sometimes we can change our external environment to be less stressful (changing jobs, for example). Other times we need to focus on buffering the effects of unavoidable stress on our physiology. The latter is where I usually focus when talking with patients. This is where we incorporate things such as regular exercise, deep breathing exercises, fostering positive social relationships, spiritual practices, and strengthening our nutritional foundation. Certain herbs, appropriately called "adaptogens," also have a calming/buffering effect; however, I don't recommend that you start with herbs/supplements. I find them very valuable, but without investing in necessary lifestyle changes, adding herbs is like throwing a glass of

water on a house fire.

**2. Respect Your Finances.** Early in my career, I attended monthly networking meetings with members from many different professions. I distinctly remember one man who worked in finance. He used this same tagline every time he started and ended a speech or conversation: "Pay yourself first." Many of the women I know are small business owners and I don't think this message is as consistent in the small business world as it should be. Frankly, you can't give from an empty pocket. Applying a self-care mentality to one's savings account, your budget, and financial future may help us better recognize where spending must stop so that long-term generosity has room to grow.

**3. Fill a Niche.** There is no shortage of life-enriching opportunities around the holidays. Could your self-care practice also fill a needed gap in your community? Could your love of baking feed the underfed? Is the art you create in your downtime something that could be auctioned or donated to raise money or awareness for a worthy cause?

When you allow yourself to rest, reflect, repair, and be revived, are you better able to share your best self with those around you? With some commitment and creativity, I believe the answer will be an overwhelming YES! *W*



Dr. Stephanie Nishek is a Naturopathic Doctor at Dakota Natural Health Center in Bismarck.

(LEFT)  
Heidi Demars



(RIGHT)  
Heidi teaching  
about mindful  
meditation jars  
and how to settle  
their minds and  
thoughts like the  
glitter settles in  
a jar.



## CONTRIBUTING TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA SOLUTION, NOT THE NOISE

by Michelle Farnsworth | Submitted Photos

Trolls. Not the cute little fellas with the bright colored hair to the sky. I'm talkin' about people online that make negative comments; going after strangers in social media posts. Or sometimes these days it doesn't have to be a stranger, perhaps it's a close friend or relative.

Have you noticed how negative social media has become? Our culture is slipping into the abyss with hate, fighting, and poison-tipped tongues. And when you feed the "trolls," it's just giving them what they want. Everyone has a right to their opinion, and you might want to share your own online, but can choosing to open up on social media be unhealthy?

Since I'm not the authority and I don't have any training, I decided to seek a professional opinion. I reached out to Heidi Demars, founder of Mindful You-Mindful Me. I think we are on the same wavelength with this cultural grenade being hurled around on a daily basis from person to person. Heidi specializes in training people of all ages about the benefits of practicing mindfulness, which include calming, focus, centering, anger management, and impulse control.

Here's our Q and A session:

**Michelle:** Heidi, have you noticed the negative nature of comments on social media?

**Heidi:** Yes, people have become very brave behind their screens. But I see social media as neutral. It really comes down to the user and how we use it. I think if people spent more time focusing on their intention, it would shift the tone. I ask myself, "What is my intention with this comment or post? Am I communicating to be right and point a finger, or am I trying to understand and be understood? Am I using it to promote what I love or condemn what I hate?"

**M:** Besides political upheaval in our world, what do you see as another issue that seems to get people worked up?

**H:** I think it stems from a lack of true connection. It seems counterintuitive since social media "connects" us now more than ever before, but I'm talking about true connection, to ourselves, our values, and each other.

For many, social media is the only



outlet to have their voice heard, so suddenly it becomes a source of power and validation.

**M:** In your daily life, how do you use social media in a positive way?

**H:** I decide before I post something if it will be of benefit to others. That doesn't mean that I'm not opinionated, passionate, and outraged by what I see happening day to day, but I want to be a part of a community of people that can rise above the noise and negativity and contribute to the greater good. Being conscious with our communication is the first step in doing that.

**M:** What are your suggestions to help stop negativity online?

**H:** Be a part of the solution! Check-in before you post something by taking a simple mindful breath and ask yourself the following questions:

- Would you say this to a person if they were standing in front of you?
- Is this contributing to the solution or the noise?
- In 10 years will this really matter?
- Or my favorite, what would my grandma think of this if she read it? (Both of my grandmas were wise women and I think they would have a few words for all of us on how to behave online.)

I completely agree with all of Heidi's questions, especially with the grandma suggestion. My grandma Florence Engstrand was an Assembly of God minister. She was cool and always got the joke, but would not be tolerant of all the online noise.

I challenge everyone to be kind. Be gentle. Be supportive and giving. Post something that brings you joy. Make a comment on someone's post that will put a smile on their face, instead of a pit in their stomach and anger in their heart. *M*



*Michelle Farnsworth is a local writer and owner of her own Younique Makeup and Skincare business. Two humans, one fur baby, and her husband Richard occupy her free time.*

Heidi Demars, creator of mind-fulness education and training for children, teens, educators, and organizations can be found at [mindfullyoumind-fulme.org](http://mindfullyoumind-fulme.org).

“

"I want to be a part of a community of people that can rise above the noise and negativity and contribute to the greater good. Being conscious with our communication is the first step in doing that."

—Heidi Demars



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# BECAUSE GUYS INSPIRE TOO!

# OH MAN

**SANTA JERRY**

by Paula Redmann | Submitted Photos

What started as a volunteer gig turned into a passion of sorts; a passion to be the best Santa (helper) he could be.

Jerry Zimprich thought he could put on the suit, help a group make some money, talk to kids, come up with a couple hearty “Ho, Ho, Ho’s” and take some photos. Maybe this wouldn’t be such a bad deal.

As soon as Jerry put on that red suit, he was hooked. He traded in the shared Santa suit and beard (NOT a jolly experience) from the mall, purchased his own suit and beard, and signed up for as many merry shifts as possible.

“There is a saying in the Santa world that, ‘Sometimes you pick the suit and sometimes the suit picks you.’ I am definitely an example of the suit picked me,” says Jerry.

And thus, Santa Jerry was born; born to embrace Father Christmas, to listen to many a child on his lap at Minot’s Dakota Square Mall, as well as in Bismarck at Kirkwood Mall, Dakota Zoo, the Central Dakota Humane Society, and the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Library. And now, since Jerry retired, he’s “friends” with the man with the bag, the beard, and the bounty at a major theme park in Florida.

Paula Redmann got a chance to visit with Santa Jerry. Here’s her interview:

**IW:** What are the most common questions kids ask Santa?

**SANTA JERRY:** *Are you the real Santa?* And so I say, “I’m as real as real can be! Check out my beard!” (IW: Just so you know, it is Jerry’s real beard now, not a purchased one.)

*Where are the reindeer?* “At the North Pole. It’s much too hot for them to stay

here. But they will be back to get me later tonight when it’s cooler.”

*What is your favorite cookie?* “I never met a cookie I didn’t like! Actually, the ones I like best are the homemade ones. What kind do you like to make?”

**IW:** We suspect there are very hard questions that Santa gets asked, too. Are we right?

**SANTA JERRY:** Christmas is not always a joyous occasion for people. The myth is that this is a magical, happy, family time when you get everything you want. It’s very hard to have a child ask if I can make someone “get better.” It’s hard to hear, “Grandma is very sick and I want her to be here for Christmas.”

One visit that really touched my heart was when two children came for pictures with their dad. They were both well prepared with typed out Christmas lists. I had time to read through both lists and visit with them about their wishes. Then I noticed near the bottom of one of the neatly typed lists, two little words had been penciled in: “mom hom.” I wasn’t sure what this was, and as I tried to phonetically sound out the words, Dad leaned over and said “Mom home.” He continued, “Their mom is in Kuwait and she won’t be home for Christmas.” You NEVER know what is going on in people’s lives. Be kind.

**IW:** Can you recall the most unique gift request you’ve received from a child?

**SANTA JERRY:** There are so many. Probably the most unique was the young farm boy from Georgia who loved working with the pigs on his farm. “I want a real hog trailer for Christmas.” Dad indicated he probably would be getting one!

**IW:** What are some of your best Santa techniques to try to calm any fears some children may have of you?

**SANTA JERRY:** One of the funny things about the crying child is Grandma's comments. On more than one occasion, the Grandma looking on has said, "That's just how his dad/mom was!"

I try to be calm. They can stand if they don't want to sit on Santa's lap. I try to distract them by talking about something they are carrying or wearing. If they are wearing a sweater with a train I can ask, "Do you like trains? I do, too!" I also have a small music box with a moving horse and sleigh inside. "Do you want to see the special music box the elves made for me?"

**IW:** What would you like children to remember about their visit with you?

**SANTA JERRY:** I love it when they go to their parents and say, "He IS the real Santa!" I hope they leave feeling they had a brief visit with a bit of magic and wonder.

**IW:** What does Santa Jerry love most about Christmas?

**SANTA JERRY:** The smiles, and not just of the children. Santa has a different perspective of the visits. Everyone is looking at the children, but of course, I have to look at the camera. I am looking at everyone watching. It is very heartwarming to see all the smiles and sometimes tears from the moms, dads, aunts, uncles, grandmas, and grandpas as they watch their child visit with Santa.

It is amazing to be a part of so many families' Christmas traditions. To think that a child can talk to Santa and somehow the very thing they asked for shows up under the tree on Christmas Eve. Without the love of family and friends, Santa would just be a colorful character. But because of the love of family and friends, Santa becomes magical! Merry Christmas! *W*



To learn more about Santa Jerry, his experiences, and stories go to [santajerry.com](http://santajerry.com) or his Facebook page, [facebook.com/santajerryakamrkringle](https://facebook.com/santajerryakamrkringle)



*Paula Redmann is the Community Relations Manager for Bismarck Parks and Recreation District. She married her high school sweetheart, Tom. They have two grown sons, Alex and Max.*



# SECOND GENERATION GENEROSITY

by Marci Narum | Photography: Photos by Jacy



At a certain age, most adults begin to recognize they are 'becoming their parents.' This realization often comes with the onset of moderate to severe angst. It can also be at least mildly humorous, which brings relief. Comfort also comes from spouses and friends who assure us, "No, you are not your mother" (or father).

Tracy Finneman is becoming her parents in a way that honors them and benefits countless others. She and her brother, Dave Pearce, are living out the influential words they heard so often from their mom and dad.

"There are three phrases that Mom and Dad raised us on. It was like meat and potatoes, and then these three things. And we heard them practically daily, both my brother and I.

'You'll never know unless you try.'

'Can't never did a thing.'

'You won't learn any younger.'"

Tracy's parents, Tom and Suzie Pearce, lived out those words. Both from the east coast, they met in college and got married. The Pearce's dream was to move west and build a log cabin together. They settled in Bismarck, started their family, and then built their dream home near the Missouri River, on the site of the now-legendary Papa's Pumpkin Patch. Tom was killed in a car accident a month after the family moved into the log home.

## YOU WON'T LEARN ANY YOUNGER

After his father's death in 1979, Dave began raising vegetables on the family's homestead. Papa's Greenhouse, named in memory of his father, provided fresh

tomatoes, cucumbers, and melons for local grocery stores for 12 years. It had been Tom's dream for Dave.

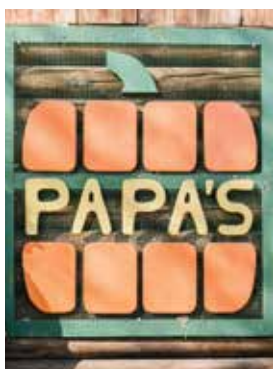
Papa's Pumpkin Patch followed in 1983, but only by accident. A family friend asked Dave to grow pumpkins for him—enough to hand out at Bismarck's annual Oktoberfest parade. But when the parade was moved up to September, Dave and his mom invited elementary school students to pick pumpkins. Thirty-four years later, Papa's Pumpkin Patch is now the largest outdoor family attraction in south central North Dakota.

"This is a really special place for a lot of people," Tracy explains. "They come as a family to spend time as a family, to make memories and have fun as a family, and then the bonus is that by their participation the business is able to give back to them and a much broader audience in the community."

## CAN'T NEVER DID A THING

Tracy says Papa's Pumpkin Patch plans to donate \$100,000 from this fall's proceeds to more than 60 local and statewide charities which support families and education. Volunteers from some of those organizations help during the season; more than 1,800 volunteers participated this year. One of their assignments is to carry on a part of Suzie Pearce's legacy: paying it forward. She passed away in 2014.

"In Mom's life there was no limit to her generosity. If she got wind that somebody in her church had a need for something she would find a way to



“

“We have God-given gifts and we are to make use of them, and to offer them for others.”

—Tracy Finneman

anonymously fill that need. She always took care of others,” Tracy says.

“So when we have volunteer groups come out, part of their orientation is to tell them that people will leave them with money. Or people will say, ‘Pay it forward,’ ‘Buy cookies for the next five guests,’ or ‘Buy pumpkins for the next three children.’ We tell [the volunteers] their assignment is to follow through with the guest’s wishes. And it is such a cool thing to see how that touches the volunteers and how it also touches the guests. It’s absolutely amazing.”

### YOU’LL NEVER KNOW UNLESS YOU TRY

The pumpkin patch is only one aspect of Tracy’s life. An entrepreneur at every turn, she is a business consultant with Integrity Partners, Inc. and owns the wildly successful business, Papa’s Granola, which she launched in 2015.

Oh, and Tracy wasn’t even a baker.

“It’s a perfect example of ‘You’ll never know unless you try.’ I had never baked before. I had never thought about it. Well, just figure it out. Just surround yourself with people smarter than you that are willing to help, and lean on them when you need assistance. Find the win-win.”

And it’s working well. In the two years since starting Papa’s Granola, Tracy has developed new flavors, doubled production twice, and doubled distribution to outlets across North Dakota. In the month of November alone, Tracy’s company baked, packaged, and distributed about 1,000 pounds of granola.

“We bake to order,” Tracy explains. “That helps us keep it as fresh as possible. Typically, we bake 150 pounds a day. And that depends on how many orders there are.”

### NEXT GENERATION OF GENEROSITY

Those three family phrases Tracy grew up hearing stay just as fresh in her mind; part of a simple recipe for living and making decisions.

“I find even working with volunteers at the pumpkin patch, in my business consulting, and making granola; every aspect of my life is just touched by those three notions.

“When I feel like I can’t do something or think, ‘How will ever get this done?’ I hear my mom or dad saying, ‘Can’t never did a thing.’ Which was code for, ‘Figure it out.’

“Or I’ll be working on something and all of a sudden realize I have to do something I’ve never done before, and it can be frightening. And I will hear Dad say, ‘You won’t learn any younger.’”

The repetition of those words gave Tracy and her brother Dave a foundation on which to begin the next generation of their family’s generosity. And to ‘become their parents.’ But most of all, to become the individuals Tom and Suzie Pearce hoped they would be.

“We just grew up believing we were going to do important things. We have God-given gifts and we are to make use of them, and to offer them for others.” *W*

by Pam Vukelic | Submitted Photos



It's common knowledge that there is as much joy in the giving as there is in the receiving. Sometimes, though, it's a bit overwhelming to add one more thing to your to-do list which already includes getting the house decorated, the programs attended, the shopping done, the cards and packages mailed, and your own mental list goes on from there.

In the interest of keeping it simple, I have some suggestions for gifts of food that take little time to prepare but will be greatly appreciated. You don't need to decorate sugar cookies to make a thoughtful gift!

This **Granola Recipe**, shared with me by high school friend Judy, is versatile not only in terms of ingredients, but also in terms of end use. Make it a package deal so it can be used as a topping. Deliver a bag of granola with a carton of Greek yogurt to serve for brunch or ice cream to serve for dessert.

- ½ c canola oil
- ½ c honey\*
- 4 c rolled oats
- 2 c shredded coconut\*\*
- 1 c sliced almonds
- ½ t cinnamon

In a saucepan, heat oil and honey until frothy and well-mixed. Pour over the dry ingredients and stir until well distributed. Pour the mixture onto a greased jelly-roll pan. Place in center of oven that has been preheated to 350 degrees. Reduce heat to 250 degrees and bake 30 minutes or until lightly browned. Turn the oven off and let granola dry in oven overnight. In the morning, add one-half cup dried fruit (I like currants because they are small).

\*Or use cinnamon-infused real maple syrup and don't add the extra cinnamon.

\*\*Since I'm not fond of coconut, I use a mixture of nuts and seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, pine nuts, etc.) or more oats to equal two cups.



I've shared with you before on these pages my favorite **Snack Mix** which is a combination of popcorn, peanuts, shoestring potatoes, and sunflower seeds. Here's a tasty variation:

- 2 qts popped popcorn
- 3 c shoestring potato sticks
- 1 c mixed nuts or peanuts
- ¼ c butter, melted
- 1 t dill weed
- 1 t Worcestershire sauce
- ½ t lemon pepper seasoning
- ¼ t garlic powder
- ¼ t onion salt

Combine first three ingredients in a large roasting pan. Combine the remaining ingredients and pour over popcorn; toss to coat. Bake, uncovered, at 325 degrees for eight to 10 minutes.

Suzie, my friend from Green Bay, shared her recipe for **Rosemary Roasted Cashews** with me:

- 1 ¼ lb unsalted cashews
- 2 T chopped rosemary
- ½ t cayenne pepper
- 2 t brown sugar
- 2 t Kosher salt
- 1 T melted butter

Bake cashews alone in 375 degree oven for 10 minutes on a baking sheet. Pour into a large bowl into which you have placed the remaining ingredients. Toss and stir well to coat. Dry in a thin layer on waxed paper.

I always keep on hand a Krusteaz Cinnamon Swirl Crumb Cake mix to serve for brunch or just for morning coffee guests. More than once I've been asked for "the recipe." To jazz it up just a bit, mix

some chopped nuts (pecans are good) into the streusel mixture. For a gift, bake it in one of the decorative paper loaf pans that proliferate the kitchen supply store shelves. Wrap in cellophane, tie with a pretty ribbon, and deliver.

Sandy, a friend from The Villages in Florida, shared a delicious cake recipe with me a couple years ago that is quick to prepare:

Combine one box of spice cake mix, two eggs, and one can of apple pie filling; pour into a well-greased bundt pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 50-60 minutes. I was excited to find small bundt pans so I can make three small cakes which are more suitable for gifting. Deliver with a jar of caramel sauce for a truly delightful treat.

The Ghiradelli Triple Chocolate Brownie mix is hard to beat. It has a rich chocolate flavor and little bits of chocolate to bite into. Add in some espresso powder and you'll have an even more intense chocolate flavor. Bake them in a bar pan or bundt pan with decorative shapes. Dust with powdered sugar or top with a thin coating of ganache.

The packaging will truly help to make your gift special. Spend just a little time on it. Use popcorn boxes to deliver snack mix, stemmed sundae dishes for nuts with a decorative spoon tied on, or a holiday mug for the granola. Recruit the kids to make the deliveries to foster a tradition of gifting. *W*



*Pam Vukelic is an online FACS (Family and Consumer Science) teacher for the Missouri River Educational Cooperative. Pam enjoys sharing homemade treats with people year round, but especially during the holiday season.*

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## **GIVE US A LITTLE HISTORY OF THE RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES.**

Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Bismarck's mission is to improve the lives of children and their families. We incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1989 and opened the doors of the Ronald McDonald House in July of 1992. The Ronald McDonald House is our cornerstone program and provides temporary housing at little or no cost to the families of seriously ill children receiving medical treatment in Bismarck. Since our opening 25 years ago, we have provided a "home away from home" to over 4,600 families. Each year we give comfort and care to approximately 200 families—keeping them together when they need each other the most.

In an effort to help even more children, our Board of Directors brought a Ronald McDonald Care Mobile to western North Dakota in January of 2012. The mission of the Care Mobile is to provide desperately needed oral health care to underserved children in their own neighborhoods in western North Dakota. The Care Mobile brings the dental care directly to the school-based or school-linked community setting, breaking down barriers to care. The Care Mobile treats patients ages 0 through 21 who do not have a regular dentist or who have not seen a dentist in the past two years.

The Care Mobile includes two patient exam/treatment rooms, a laboratory, reception, and medical records areas. Services provided on the Care Mobile include diagnostic, preventive, restorative, and referrals as needed. The Care Mobile is staffed by a dentist, dental hygienist, and dental assistant licensed to practice in North Dakota and contracted through Bridging the Dental Gap, another Bismarck not-for-profit organization.

We also launched a School Based Sealant (SBS) Program two years ago in cooperation with the North Dakota State Oral Health Department and a Health Resources Services Administration Grant. This SBS Program complements the Care Mobile program, with a registered dental hygienist visiting schools before a Care Mobile visit, providing preventive sealant and fluoride varnish treatments, as well as screening for follow up treatment on the Care Mobile. Most dental diseases are preventable and this program focuses on prevention. Medicaid and insurance are billed, but no child is denied care due to inability to pay. We strive to reach children who have no other means to access oral health care. The majority of the children seen are uninsured or on Medicaid and unable to find a dental provider in their area that accepts Medicaid. The Care Mobile complements and does not replace services in the community.

## HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT FROM OTHER ORGANIZATIONS LIKE YOURS?

The Ronald McDonald House was the first organization in western North Dakota to provide temporary housing for the families of hospitalized patients. And while other organizations now offer housing, we are unique in that we are the only one that is operated solely for the families of pediatric patients, ages 0-21.

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## HOW CAN PEOPLE DONATE OR GET INVOLVED?

We welcome monetary donations as well as items from our "wish list" which is posted on our website. And, operating 365 days a year, we are also always looking for additional volunteers to work four hour shifts during the day, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on Sundays. The volunteer application is also posted on the website for volunteers 18 or older. *M*







# WHEN

# Flying

by Carole Hemingway | Submitted Photos

NO, I didn't know the Wright Brothers personally. But I could have known Orville, who died on January 30, 1948. I was only seven-years-old then; still, I could have held the doorbell he was fixing to his home in Oakwood, Ohio, when he had a sudden heart attack at age 76 and left our world richer for the years he gave us. Wilbur died of typhoid fever in 1912; he was only 45 years old, but he certainly lived all those years dreaming of one day flying, like the birds both brothers observed.

The Wright Brothers were respected pioneers who marched into the frontier of aviation. They experimented with gliders at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina between 1900 and 1903. They made over a thousand flights, each year constructing a new glider, and by 1903 they were the most skilled glider pilots in the world. By 1903, they built the Wright Flyer and installed an engine in their bicycle shop in Dayton, Ohio.

Wilbur, the older brother was a genius, straight forward and clear in explaining the details of how planes work, while Orville, the younger one was curious, the 'what if' brother. Neither was a pretty boy and neither ever married. Their mistresses were made of 'an aluminum eggshell' delicately built. Their goal was not only to ride with the wind but to balance and steer in the air. Kitty Hawk was the launching pad for their experiments, where high winds were the norm in not so much as making

headway but maintaining balance. Wind was essential; a motor was not. The brothers did all this together, on their own, paying their own way, as they did everything in their lives. To these heroic brothers, 'fear was a stranger,' as they were on intimate terms with the wind.

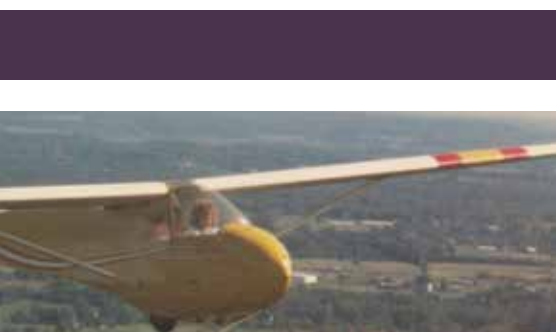
The Wright Brothers came from Midwest Ohio, originated from humble beginnings, raised by a minister and a very mechanically-minded mother. Neither brother finished high school, therefore college was not in their futures as they shaped it. Imagine no running water, telephone, electricity, or indoor plumbing. But they had lots and lots of books and both felt it was better to seek more knowledge rather than more power.

To use the wind to glide; studying the birds had to bring a certain amount of magic dust into their lives by two very different-thinking magicians...to become **KINGS OF THE HILL**. Why not? They grew up in a family with plenty of love to go around, emotional support, and encouragement. Who couldn't thrive in that kind of environment? They had no money, but sure had a lot of faith.

No bird soars in a calm.

Through four years of cuts and bruises, broken bones and ribs from near fatal crashes, they pushed on until 10:35 a.m. in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on December 17, 1903. Orville slipped off the rope holding the 'Flyer' and headed slowly forward into a nasty headwind, and Wilbur, his left hand





# WAS FUN

on the wing, effortlessly beside it. Down the track which they had also built, their Flyer began its voyage, lifting erratically at first, a bit unsteady into the 'fates of air pockets,' like a feather light 'bucking bronco' ride until one wing hit the sand. The event lasted all of 12 seconds and had flown 120 feet, less than half the length of a football field. Neither brother was scared by the process, there wasn't time. As the day wore on, each of the following four test runs got better and ended up a distance of 825 feet in 59 seconds.

During the four years it took to get this far, they endured very bad weather, many setbacks, injuries from near fatal crash landings, numerous disappointments, and had to put up with an impatient public; they were laughed at, and bitten by swarms of mosquitoes. Five round trips were made by train from Dayton, Ohio to North Carolina, 7,000 miles, and all to fly no more than half a mile. But they never gave up. They succeeded where no one else had.

It took hard work and a lot of common sense from two devoted brothers, joined at the hip, who put their hearts and souls into their project. They never lost faith. You can't do anything without it. The Wright Brothers taught us to fly and they had fun along the way. The rest, as they say, is history! *W*



*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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