

Features



The Purity of a Servants Heart

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*Written by
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Dexter, Missouri - A life is often judged by the accomplishments of a person. What if the accomplishments of a person and their path in life has been humbly kept quiet. Typically, you only know that a humble natured person is just "nice". That's it ... "They are a nice person". Wouldn't you like to really understand the complete "Paul Harvey" version of that person.

Mary Northern is one of those individuals whose path of life has been one of a humble servant. Deep within her pleasant, loving, expressions, she daily shares joy with everyone she comes in contact. A quiet smile and a sweet touch of her voice will often make a person feel that they have just encountered a person whose life has been filled with blessings. It seems safe to assume that the joy and happiness she pours into the lives of others must certainly be the results of a joyful life.

The joys of "Miss Mary", as she is affectionately known by many, are abundant and they continue to multiply. Her gifts that bless the hearts of others are a commitment and a passion that she developed early in her life. Mary remains convinced that through her own challenges of life, God continues to have a special purpose for her.

The path of life is often filled with bumpy side roads. Many times, the side trips are paths that people do not choose but are required to endure. They are not pretty nor are they enjoyable, they simply are difficult times filled with hurt, heartache, and challenges.

Some people share these experiences openly in a hope to offer encouragement and hope for others that are going through similar circumstances. Others remain very private about those experiences, sharing with only a few very select and close friends. Mary has been one to remain private and simply share her expressions of love to her family and to others.

As a young girl, Mary Northern was an active, happy person. She was involved in an accident in her late teen years that left her body paralyzed for a period of time. Her injuries were significant and doctors at Barnes hospital told her that she shouldn't have been able to survive these injuries.

After an extended time in Barnes hospital, many surgeries and extensive rehabilitation, Mary regained her ability to walk using a cane. Her near death experience convinced Mary at a young age that God had a special purpose for her life.

The miracles of Mary's life continue to unfold as



doctors informed her that she would be unable to have children. Again, God had a different plan for Mary's life as she later married and had two children who are the pride of her life - Scott Northern of Dexter and Shelley Silvey who resides in Joplin, Missouri. Her reward became even greater as she was further blessed with 7 grandchildren.

Convinced of God's purpose for her life, Mary began a life of pouring her love and testimony into the lives of families with young children in the Dexter area. Only seeing her abilities and ignoring any disabilities, Mary set out to make her life count for something.

Counting her blessings, Mary found that loving others and showing kindness to others were her greatest gifts she could offer. She began to share her life and spirit with local working mothers, who needed someone to watch their children during the day.

Mary initially babysat children in her own home when her children were small. As her own children began to attend school, she began her own special ministry of babysitting for families in their homes. Mary literally raised children from birth to school age, while these children enjoyed the familiar comforts of the family's own home.

One family in one home was not the type of babysitting that brought about the same financial rewards of keeping multiple children in her own home. But her ministry was not about quantity but quality. Her gift involved a deeper development of the special relationships with the babies and their families by working on a one to one basis.

Far more than childcare, Mary found it important to guard the quality time a working mother would have with her children by providing a clean home and often times, a home-made meal ready to be served to the entire family at the end of the day. Mary was an angel to these fortunate families that were blessed enjoy her ministry and friendship.

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Additional hardship came into Mary's life

in 1992 when she required additional back surgery to fuse her lumbar spine. Although this surgery was a medically necessity, it left her wheelchair bound and unable to continue with her babysitting ministry.

Once again, Mary did not allow the obstacles of life to prevent her from blessing others with her servant's heart. No longer able to drive on her own, Mary became dependent on the Stoddard County Transit Service for transportation. At that point, she realized the blessing that the transit offers to others in our community were quickly becoming her blessing.

In 1998, the transit hoped to offer Saturday services to their clients but were challenged by budget constraints to afford a dispatcher for that day. This was "Miss Mary's" opportunity to yet again, serve others. Again, only focused on her abilities, she stepped in to volunteer three days a week and has done so ever since this time. Mary became a part of the puzzle to help make the transit's Saturday service available to others in our community.

"Mary has been a loyal friend to the transit for many years. She not only rides the transit, but she volunteers her time as well," commented Rachel Garrett, manager at Stoddard County Transit. "We here at Stoddard County Transit always look forward to Mary's generous words and smiling face."

Rachel also added, "Her co-workers always look forward to delicious baked goods and the occasional ham and bean dinners that she opens her home for."

Mary's service also includes being the Activity Director at the Dexter Senior Nutrition Center. She serves on the Site Council and is a member of the Dexter Senior Choir, which sings several times a week in various settings bringing joy to many shut-ins.

The choir sings every Monday at Central Gardens where Mary is a resident. Mary is known as the "Cookie Queen" at Central Gardens as she always provides homemade refreshments for the residents after the groups musical presentations.

"Mary is a great asset to the Senior Center. She is our Activity Director and has been active in the Center for several years." commented Dena Rawson, administrator at the Dexter O.A.K.S. Center. "She bakes and brings sweet treats to the center occasionally and shares with everyone."



"I might add she is one AWESOME cook," continued Rawson. "She has treated my staff and me to dinner in her home."

Mary Northern has a convincing way of letting others know that she truly loves and cares about them. Sometimes it's through her gifts that you know are from the heart and other times, it's simply a sweet smile and 'hello'.

"Mary has a kind heart and is up for helping in any way I need her. She sings in the choir here at the center on Thursdays. Everyone here loves Miss Mary and she is very deserving of any recognition that she gets," complimented Dena.

What has inspired Mary to continue to serve through tough obstacle when many would have retreated into an attitude of "Why me". Mary simply states "Why not me," and states that "I can't imagine not doing for others."

She doesn't like to think of herself as handicapped, and she expresses that making other people happy makes her happy. She feels she has spent her life trying to do for others so that she does not miss the calling God one day saved her life to perform.

Mary claims many Bible verses as her inspiration, but she particularly loves verses claiming God's promises. She loves the promise that God will not put more on a person than they can handle together with the help of God. Mary gains daily strength by relying of God's word for direction in her life and service.

Many times, our world has a way pulling our focus toward temporal and material things of life. The purity and simplicity of the servant's heart found in Mary Northern is a lesson for us all. Creating happiness and spreading joy through the gifts that God has given to Mary has become a way of life for her. Through the struggles and tough times, it's easy to see that Mary Northern considers it a privilege and a blessing to be in God's grace and serving others.

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