

Steel Magnolias

Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc.

Love=Right=Might

February 16, 2009

Love

February, I suppose, is universally recognized as the month to celebrate love....**Valentines Day!** While we all enjoy the attention this hallowed day furnishes, there is a much more profound definition of love.

We have become a society that uses the word love very casually. Sometimes we express love for a grilled cheese sandwich with much the same intensity that we express love for the people in our lives.

I think everyone, without exception has experienced a sense of apathy; in our churches, and in our various organizations that are dedicated to community needs. Why?

Answers to the why are as varied as the people who attempt to answer this question. Some say that the Internet has isolated us from each other. I suppose therein lies some truth. Some say we become overwhelmed at the enormous need and simply shut down. In this economic climate, we

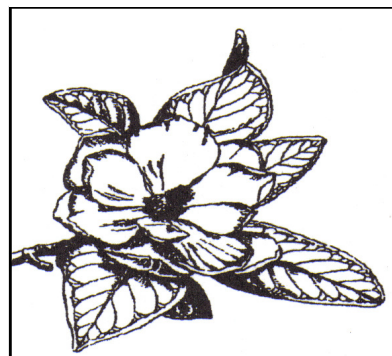
know the needs multiply. Some say we have become such a materialistic society that we have become narcissistic and think only of our own wants. There is probably some truth to all these suggestions.

Regardless, for those of us who are Christians, the message of Christ is clear: "Love your neighbor as yourself." When asked, "Who is my neighbor?," Jesus provided an example with the Good Samaritan: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, took pity, on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds,

pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." Luke: 10:30-37

Fight for Right

In 2008, Representative Lea Fite, because of a letter written by Steel Magnolias, introduced a bill to close the loophole in the Alabama Medicaid Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act. This bill passed in the House but not the Senate. The 2009 regular legislative session, opened on Tuesday, February 3. Rep. Fite has reintroduced this bill. Steel Magnolias have been feverously working to help make this bill become law.



Sharing love through support

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Steel Magnolias seeks only to change the policy that demands a woman go to the Alabama Public Health Department, before being diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer, in order to qualify for access to treatment.

On Monday, February 2, I mailed letters to Senator Del Marsh, Senator Jim Preuitt, Lt. Governor Jim Folsom, Jr., Gov. Bob Riley and Rep. Lea Fite. I included emails from two newly diagnosed women. For several years, Steel Magnolias has been

receiving correspondence from terrified, newly diagnosed patients, asking the same question.

Letter to Legislators

For years, Steel Magnolias has been receiving frantic calls and emails from uninsured breast cancer patients who have been denied coverage because of this loophole. Please allow me to share correspondence from two women, one newly retired and one newly divorced.

"I am a 28 year old, recently divorced, mother of two and was recently diagnosed with stage III breast cancer. Can you help me? I have no insurance, what do you know about the Breast and Cervical Cancer law?" "To qualify for coverage under this Medicaid program, a woman has to be seen at the Alabama Public Health Department before being diagnosed by a doctor. This is a loophole that does not exist in Georgia or Mississippi, and Steel Magnolias is trying to raise awareness about this unfair and inequitable Alabama policy. I am sorry." "What a terrible loophole! How many people are going to the health department to get diagnosed for breast cancer? Most women are going to their OBGYN. How is that helping anyone?"

My response to the above questions: "I confronted Ms. Maynard, Screening Coordinator, Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, about the Medicaid program not being advertised. She responded, "It doesn't need to be advertised, when a patient comes to us, if they have cancer, we tell them about it." I told her, "That is outrageous!"

"Hello, I live in Lineville and have worked for the past 40 years and have had good medical insurance all that time. That ran out July 31, 2007. I have recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. My husband had throat cancer two years ago and is now on Social Security and Medicare. My husband and I have always worked and been good stewards of our money. I don't know what the future holds but I know in my heart that God controls that future for us." When I told this dear woman, who had paid taxes that helped fund this program, that she didn't qualify because she was diagnosed before going to the health department, she said, "I have never been to the health department, how was I supposed to know?"

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that this loophole is a means of reducing the number of patients enrolled into the Medicaid program. How ludicrous to think money is being saved by denying treatment for either of these patients! The younger woman could leave children who could become wards of the state! The older could leave a disabled husband who could become a ward of the state!

In time, I believe this loophole will be closed by our legislators in Washington, D.C., giving every poor, uninsured woman who qualifies, the same access to treatment. It is my hope that like Texas, Alabama legislators will step up to the plate and do the RIGHT thing!

I recently heard a quote that is most fitting:

"Some people know the cost of everything and the value of nothing."

Might

The Prayer of Jabez

Oh that you would bless me indeed, And enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me
And that You would keep me from evil that I may not cause pain.
And God granted his request.
1st Chronicles 4:10

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13

"A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is braver five minutes longer."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Let us have faith that Right makes Might and in that faith let us dare to do our best as we understand it."

Abraham Lincoln

Quince and Daffodils

As we travel, here and there, in spite of the shivering cold and biting wind, colorful displays of quince and daffodils are scattered in local landscapes. Like me, I'm sure everyone is longing for Spring. It was such a time in 2005, when I wrote this poem.

The Promise of Daffodils

Beneath my lovely willow tree,
Her graceful limbs, bowing and spinning;
Laid bare, in the cold, north wind,
Her once rich leaves lay quivering.

Her cold and naked branches
Sleep through the winter's wind and snow
Till Spring's warmth once again
Clothes her with a beauty that entrances

In the grip of Winter's night,
My being aches with Mother Nature.
Go away day, cold and gray,
Come warmth, come beauty, come light.

While the earth is still frozen and still,
In a relentless winter's chill,
My spirit is made to soar;
By the promise of daffodils.

Lenora Washington Johnson
March 2005

Grand mama's Drama in the Mile High City

Addison Jo Becker and Luke Gordon Kennedy blessed us with their births on Dec. 9, 2008. I, Nana, the one that has waited and waited and waited for the birth of these two, the one that wanted so badly to be with my daughters/sons-in-laws for this wonderful occasion, was stuck at the Denver airport in snow and ice! My scheduled Monday afternoon flight from Denver to Gunnison made it 3/4 of the way there, and the check engine light or something like it came on. There is no mechanic at Gunnison (airport a lot like 'Wings' airport) so the plane was turned around and flown back to Denver. After approximately one hour, we re-boarded for the 30 min. flight to Gunnison. I was so excited-not only about my soon to be born granddaughter, but seeing Jennifer too-it had been 11 months since we had last seen each other. We sat on the runway for about 15 minutes, then they announced that in our hour wait, the weather has deteriorated so badly in Gunnison that no planes could land. As you can imagine, I was not a happy camper by this time. Once again we got off the plane, not really sure of what to do next. Went back to gate C-6, received a \$10 meal voucher that had expired in November and a telephone number for a discounted hotel room. Rode the shuttle bus to a very nice hotel, showered and put back on grungy clothes that I had on since 6 a.m.

I called Paul and my daughters and gave them my phone number (cell phone battery almost dead and charger is on the plane). Watched a little TV and decided to try to get some sleep. Had asked for wakeup call at front desk when I checked in, so I wasn't that surprised when a very loud phone ringing woke me up -in a strange dark place. My oldest daughter, Emily, who lives in Pensacola and whose son is due December 21, is on the line, telling me, in her sweet little voice, "Momma, my water has broke so we're on our way to the hospital." Once again, I am wired! Too early to call anyone, it's 3:30 a.m. I toss and turn, finally doze off, only for that blame telephone to start ringing again! I'm thinking, yeah, it's finally time to get up and get to Gunnison. Yeah!! But no, it's Jennifer-giving me the news that her contractions are about 3 minutes apart and pretty strong, so they too are on their way to the hospital.

Well-no longer need a wake-up call-it is now 4:30, so I have no trouble being ready for the 6:00 am shuttle back to the airport. Only the 6 am shuttle turned in to the 6:50 am shuttle! And, the 20 minute trip back to the airport turned into the 40 minutes trip due to icy/snowy road conditions all around Denver.

I finally arrive back at the airport-try to check in-and this sweet' (Hah!!!xyq!!zzz!!!xxx!!!) employee informs me that my departing flight is ON schedule and there is no way that I can make it thru security and the 40 miles to gate c-6 and 'NO, we CANNOT GET THEM TO WAIT, that is just not done.' I can understand how stressed people end up in situations that they usually would not be in, because I was ready to scream at somebody, ANYBODY! The only thing that kept me from it was the horror shows on TV of airport security macing and tazzing and handcuffing some poor person for having a complete and total meltdown. I knew for sure I wouldn't see my grandchildren until they started kindergarten if I had a come-apart! I opted to numbly rebook for the afternoon flight and pray nothing else went haywire! There are only two flights to Gunnison each day, so if the weather/?check engine lights didn't cooperate, I would get to spend another night in Denver. The next few hours crawled by!

I couldn't call anyone just to talk, because I had to save what little charge I had in case Em or Jenn called. And they did-Jennifer had an emergency c-section and 41 minutes later Emily had Luke. And where was Nana?? At the Denver Airport!!!!

Submitted by Steel Magnolia, Pam Bussey

Thank you Pam for sharing this dramatic story.

Welcome To This World

Saturday, January 31, Dr. Ashley and Dr. Mel Stewart, were blessed with a third son. Dr. Ashley put it this way: "My beautiful son was born January 31-he is absolutely perfect in every way! His name is Augustus Vincent Stewart. He weighed in at 7 lb 3 oz, 19.5 inches long. He was delivered by Dr. Larry Jones at RMC. The team there was the best I have ever seen!" Dr. Ashley shared pictures of her three sons and a picture with proud daddy, Dr. Mel holding Augustus Vincent. Thank you Dr. Ashley for sharing this precious event with Steel Magnolias!

??Ask Dr. Ashley??

Question: With so much in the news about MRSA, what advice would you give to someone who is scheduled for surgery, about doing the best to avoid infection? We all know that in the best of circumstances, infection can occur. At what point should a patient take immediate action? Are there symptoms that warn of possible MRSA? If MRSA is caught early, can it be stopped?

Answer: Great Question! MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. The Staph bacterium has always been normally present on skin and in nasal passages of human beings. There, it enjoys a commensal relationship with us (That is, we provide a nice place to live, and it keeps pathogenic-dangerous-organisms from occupying the same space).

MRSA is a pathogen that has been bred by the overuse of antibiotics. When antibiotics are used inappropriately, a very small number of bacteria survive because of some mutation that allows those individuals to avoid being killed by the drug. When those individuals reproduce, they give rise to an entire variant of the species that cannot be killed with standard antibiotics.

There are two types of MRSA-community acquired and hospital acquired. Community acquired MRSA generally presents as a skin abscess or nasal infection. Fortunately, there are several drugs that treat this type of MRSA, including Bactrim and Cindamycin. Hospital-acquired MRSA tends to be more serious, in part because the host (the patient) is weakened in some way. These infections, which may present as wound infections, pneumonias, urinary tract infections, or abscesses, must be treated with Vancomycin or Zynox, unless there is a particular drug identified by the lab that a particular bug is sensitive to.

As your physicians, we take the threat of infection quite seriously. Although you don't see it, there has been a massive effort to curtail the inappropriate use of antibiotics. We have made up protocols and internal auditing devices to see that we are all in compliance. Any surgery is kept meticulously sterile. Surgical sites are inspected at least daily, and any fever prompts an investigation. A diagnosis of MRSA prompts isolation procedures immediately.

Unfortunately, despite the measures taken to prevent the spread of MRSA, it does happen. Some patients are particularly vulnerable—like those that are elderly or have diabetes, or those that are critically ill. If you are one of those patients, I am sure your health care team would appreciate your vigilance in looking out for signs of infection, including pain or redness at an incision site, fevers, burning or frequent urination, or coughing. As the patient, any sign of infection should be reported to your doctor immediately.

On a frightening note—There is burgeoning evidence that MRSA is developing resistance to the very few drugs we have available to treat it. That means that giving prophylactic drugs is the wrong thing to do. We would be breeding groups of superbugs that we have absolutely no control over. Courtesy of Dr. Ashley Hawkins Stewart

Thank you Dr. Ashley!! **Dr. Stewart will be back at work in the Surgical Clinic at McClellan Medical Mall the beginning of March. Dr. Stewart specializes in breast surgeries.**

Correspondence

Dear Steel Magnolias, Just want you to know how much I appreciate all of you for your prayers, your gifts and cards, during my Breast Cancer Journey. I don't know how we could have gotten through such a difficult time without the love and support of so many. Blessed....Gal. 5:22-23

Love to All, Sonja.....Hoover, AL

On behalf of Cassandra, my cousin, who lived in Muscle Shoals, AL, passed on Jan. 8, 2009, and our family, we want to thank Steel Magnolias for the outstanding support you provided to Cassandra during her fight with cancer. The care packages and newsletters were of great encouragement during this battle. I learned the war against cancer is not always ours to win, but each battle is a victory towards defeating this disease.

Thank you, David.....Jacksonville, AL

Lenora, You and the ladies at Steel Magnolias were so good to my wife, I had to tell K about what you did. I hope you will take her under your wings as you did for us. Her Email address is shown above. Please contact her.

Terry.....Jasper, AL

(Response) Thank you for letting us know about your friend. Thank you for the kind words. I trust your wife is doing well. I will get a message to K and we will try and ease this devastating journey as much as possible. Representative Lea Fite has reintroduced a bill to close the loophole in Alabama's Medicaid Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act. Please pray about this legislation and try and get people in your neck of the woods to write letters to Senators. Rep. Fite said he is assured we have passage in the HOUSE. God bless you for reaching out on behalf of a friend. Lenora.....Steel Magnolias

I received this e-mail and was wondering if I can get more information. What is the number of the bill and what type of loophole is it closing? Thank you for any information you can provide. Elise....?, AL

(E-mail sent to Elise) I received this email from my friends at Steel Magnolias, a wonderful breast cancer support group in Anniston. There is a return email and physical address at the bottom of this email. Please help us get as many letters as we can! Thanks, Claire....Helena, AL

(Response) I responded: Thank you so very much for responding to our loophole letter! I provided Elise with information that has been repeated to every inquirer. See pg.2 of this newsletter. Lenora.....Steel Magnolias

Steel Magnolias & Men of steel Meet

The Steel Magnolias Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc., met on January 27, 2009, in the Galley at the Tyler Center. Chaplain Ina Rooks passed out the prayer list for the month and prayed for everyone on the list and gave thanks for our food. The Men of Steel joined us for a delicious meal of chili, salads and desserts.

President, Marti Warren called the meeting to order. There were no minutes. Financial report was given by Treasurer, Nancy Burnell. Report was approved.

No Old Business.....

New Business: **1.** There was a motion by Sherry Grinstead to reserve Classic on Noble for our annual New Beginnings Banquet (Tuesday, July 28, 2009). Nancy Burnell seconded and motion passed. **2.** Marti asked everyone to bring jewelry contributions so that she can have them ready for the April 11, 2009, Bake & Jewelry Sale. **3.** There is a need for help on the 3rd Monday of each month in getting the newsletter ready for mailing. Please volunteer! **4.** There is a need for someone to keep abreast of the obituaries and notify Lenora. (Becky Tiner volunteered for this task). **5.** There is a need for those willing to stuff pillows for our fundraisers. **6.** Lenora informed us of a symposium on aging and a luncheon on Feb. 18, 2009 at the Anniston Meeting Center. Cost for lunch, catered by Classic on Noble is \$10. Doors will open at 10 am to allow viewing of information tables. Helen Henley will be hostess at the Chaplain's table, including Steel Magnolias. For more info and to buy ticket for lunch, please call (256) 235-4147. **7.** Lenora informed us of a Feb. 14, Komen Alabama, workshop on Finances and Insurance for the cancer patient. Need someone to attend.

Everyone chuckled as different ladies read 1930's advertisements of the latest and the best in kitchen gadgets as well as the benefits of smoking, etc.

We had two new breast cancer survivors who shared their stories and brought us up to date with their progress as they continue their battle with breast cancer: **Paula, a former student of Marti Warren**, was diagnosed seven months ago. Her tumor was golf ball size. She underwent chemo prior to surgery. At this time she is receiving radiation treatments. She is an employee of RMC and the mother of two children. **At close to the same time, Molly learned she had cancer** in both her breast and her colon. She has had both surgeries and chemotherapy for breast cancer. She will soon start treatments for colon cancer. Her great-granddaughter, Megan, a student at Weaver High School, accompanied Molly to the Steel Magnolias meeting. We asked Megan about the Steel Magnolias awareness program, presented by Gladys Denizard. Megan said, "Ms. Denizard was funny and I really enjoyed the class.

Our door prize was the winter issue of Longleaf Style Magazine, won by Paula.

Sherry Grinstead asked for everyone to save "Box Tops for Education" coupons that are found on many of the products we buy at the grocery store. Box Top coupons, empty ink cartridges, Nestle water labels, all contribute to funding for schools.

Meeting adjourned
Margaret Taylor, Secretary

Financial Report

January	Balance brought forward	7,601.20
01—100.00	Lenora Johnson: monthly expense	7,501.20
03+ 100.00	Contribution from S. Snider in honor of mother	7,601.20
07— 42.00	Lenora Johnson, for roll of postage stamps	7,529.20
09— 30.00	Lenora Johnson-reimbursement for transport of patient	7,529.20
10—441.00	WideNet Consulting, Annual Mgt. Fee	7,088.20
22— 67.99	Lenora Dual Ink Cartridge for office printer	7,020.21
27— 19.00	Lenora Johnson, Drinks for meetings	7,001.21

....Hello....

We Need

Contributions of Costume Jewelry

Even broken pieces

Call Marti...(256) 239-0855

Carry (Clearly Marked: for Steel Magnolias) or mail to....

Cotton Antiques & Collectables, 518 Main St., Oxford, AL 36203

Please keep the Petition Lists coming:

We are making progress. Our letters are making a difference.

We voted the men and women into office, who will decide whether our Mothers, Sisters, Daughters, etc., will continue to be ruled out of a program that became law in 2001, in the state of Alabama, that denies treatments for uninsured breast and cervical cancer patients, simply because they failed to make an appointment with a nurse practitioner at the public health department before being diagnosed by a doctor. This is a bureaucratic loophole and should not prevent qualifying, uninsured women from getting cancer treatments through the Medicaid Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act.

Doctors would have never ordered a mammogram for an uninsured patient, RMC would never have invited an uninsured woman to get a mammogram paid for by the Altrusa Club, the Altrusa Club would never have provided free mammograms, and Steel Magnolias would have never advertised the Altrusa Club free mammograms, if any of us had known we were preventing any woman identified as a breast cancer patient from having access to a program that would pay for her surgery, her chemo, her radiation, her medications, etc., etc.

Representative Lea Fite is encouraged because of the response of
His colleagues in the House and Senate.

Alabama women and their families need to make their voices heard! You or someone you love could be or become uninsured, and because they were diagnosed by their doctor with breast or cervical cancer, then denied access to the Medicaid Breast & Cervical Cancer Treatment Act. Together we can influence our representatives and senators to close this unfair, inequitable loophole in the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act.

Please call (256) 231-8827 (Your call will be returned)

Email lenora@steelmagnoliasinc.org

Or write your Senator and Representative

11 S. Union St., Montgomery, AL 36130

Mark Your Calendar

Tuesday, February 24, 2009...Steel Magnolias & Men of Steel meet 5:00 p.m., Tyler Center, Magnolias in the Galley & Men in the Nook. Special guests are:

From Curves...Jo Ann-Oxford, Ruby-Jacksonville, Trudi-Piedmont, Sandy-Saks

Please bring your favorite sandwich, salad, fruit or light dessert

Tuesday, March 24, 2009: Steel Magnolias & Men of Steel Meet

Saturday, April 11, 2009...Steel Magnolias annual Bake & Jewelry sale, 9 am-5 pm.
Quintard Mall...in front of Kirklands

Joggin' Inside

Speeding Ticket

Did you hear about the 83 year old woman who talked herself out of a speeding ticket by telling the young officer that she had to get there before she forgot where she was going? Makes perfectly good sense to me.....

Courtesy of..... Pokey Warren

The Black Bra

Two ladies were having lunch, 1 married and 1 unmarried. One is engaged and the other has been married for 20+ years. They were chatting about Valentine's Day and relationships and decided to amaze their partners by wearing a black leather bra, stiletto heels and a mask over their eyes. They agreed to meet in a few days to exchange notes. Here's how it went: The engaged lady: The other night when my boyfriend came over, he found me with a black leather bodice, tall stilettos and a mask. He saw me and said, "You are the woman of my dreams. I love you!" The married one: When my husband came home I was wearing the leather bodice, black stockings, stilettos and a mask over my eyes. As soon as he came in the door and saw me, he said, "What's for dinner, Batman?"

Courtesy of....Debra

Chuckles For You.....(Kids Do the Darndest Things!)

Courtesy of..... Pokey

I Know How You Feel

While I sat in the reception area of my doctor's office, a woman rolled an elderly man in a wheelchair into the room. As she went to the receptionist's desk, the man sat there, alone and silent. Just as I was thinking I should make small talk with him, a little boy slipped off his mother's lap and walked over to the wheelchair. Placing his hand on the man's, he said, "I know how you feel, My mom makes me ride in the stroller too!"

Mulling it Over

As I was nursing my baby, my cousin's six-year-old daughter, Krissy, came into the room. Never having seen anyone breast feed before, she was intrigued and full of all kinds of questions about what I was doing. After mulling over my answers, she remarked, "My mom has some of those, but I don't think she knows how to use them!"

Fear Factor

One afternoon, while I was visiting my library, I noticed a group of preschoolers gathered for story time. The book they were reading was *There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed A Fly*. After the librarian finished the first page, she asked the children, "Do you think she'll die?" "Nope," a little girl in the back said. "I saw this last night on Fear Factor."

Where Do They Come From?

On the way back from a Cub Scout meeting, my grandson asked my son the question. "Dad, I know that babies come from mommies' tummies, but how do they get there in the first place?" he asked innocently. After my son hemmed and hawed awhile, my grandson finally spoke up in disgust. "You don't have to make something up, Dad. It's ok if you don't know the answer."

Just Like Daddy

A young man and woman are engaged to be married. The young woman hears from family friends that her future father-in-law has, since their marriage, every morning before going to work, brought his wife breakfast in bed. The young woman asks her fiancée about what she has been told. He says "Yes, daddy has always done that." She excitedly says, "That's great! I really look forward to breakfast in bed." To which her fiancée replies, "I am more like my mama."

You're So Smart

I was out walking with my granddaughter. She picked up something off the ground and started to put it in her mouth. I took the item from her and asked her not to do that. "Why?" my Granddaughter asked. "Because it's been on the ground; you don't know where it has been, it is dirty, and probably has germs," I replied. At this point, my Granddaughter looked at me with total admiration and asked, "Grandma, how do you know all this stuff? You are so smart!" I was thinking quickly and said to her, "All Grandma's know this stuff. It's on the Grandma Test. You have to know it, or they don't let you be a Grandma." We walked along in silence for 2 or 3 minutes, but she was evidently pondering this new information. "Oh I get it!" she beamed, "So if you don't pass the test you have to be a Grandpa."