

Knitting up Broken Fragments

by: Callie Smith

Who knew that a small blue plastic sewing kit and a simple baby doll pattern could birth a ministry? But in the hands of then nine-year-old Susie Miolen, that’s exactly what happened. In a moment that didn’t seem all that momentous or earth-shaking, a little girl was given a lifelong passion that today helps clothe many of Bradley County with not only material warmth but with the love of God. “Sewing has always made me happy and fulfilled; but it’s a different level of enjoyment being able to give it back to the Lord,” Miolen explained, “I’ve learned that God gives us passions for a reason...[and that] the little things count when God is in them.”



Miolen first noticed how she can use sewing to minister in The Caring Place community six years ago while sorting through a pile of donated clothes. “I saw that many of the clothes were fine except for a couple of missing buttons here and there, a torn seam, or a broken zipper—things that I could fix.” Miolen started to take home bundles of clothes to repair every week in her large red sack—dubbed “Mrs. Santa’s bag.” From winter coats and dress pants to tunics and vests, Miolen salvaged a countless amount of clothes over the past six years. The roughly 10 to 15 hours and 25 to 30 buttons spent mending each week have all been worth it in Miolen’s eyes.

“I’ll never forget the day a woman came into The Caring Place who was just skin and bones, dragging her portable oxygen tank behind her. She got cold easily and was always so glad to find anything that fit and warmed her small frame,” relates Miolen. That day Miolen had just finished re-buttoning a sweater that ended up fitting the woman perfectly. “That was all the pay-off I needed, seeing her smiling in that sweater...I always pray over the clothes to give their wearers a sense of love covering them and an awareness of how special they are—that they will somehow know that God loves them.” Seeing the sweater Miolen had invested with prayer and with her own stitch work wresting on the woman’s shoulders, she knew this woman was worth every bit of the labor and the love.

“It can be so easy to become weary in well-doing, but whether I’m registering people, sorting clothes, or sewing, I know it’s so important to share Jesus’ love,” said Miolen. She expressed that so many that come to The Caring Place buy into the lie that they are worthless; and the only thing that can cut through this lie is God’s love—whether it is shown through a specially-mended shirt, a listening ear, or a prayer from one human heart to another. God’s love must have an outlet, no matter if it flows through a pen, a gardening hoe, a computer screen, or a sewing needle. “I was asked a while ago, ‘What’s in your hand?’ And it’s stuck with me ever since”— as a reminder of how anyone is capable of and called to be God’s outlet.

In the end, whether the issue is garments or people, Miolen early on seemed to ask the same question author Marilynne Robinson penned in her novel *Housekeeping*: “Well, what are all these broken fragments for, if not to be knit up finally?”

Caring From the Bottom of Our Heart

On April 7, 2011, The Caring Place will host a fundraiser featuring Melissa Lawson who was the 2008 winner of Nashville Star and will perform several of her country hits. Café Roma will provide a wonderful meal, and a silent auction will be held. The fundraiser will be held in the sanctuary of Westmore Church of God at 6:00pm. Tickets are \$50.00 per person or a table of eight for \$375.00. Please contact the Caring Place to purchase your tickets.





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The Caring Place is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization and all donations are tax deductible.

Welcome New Volunteers

Chrissy Bain	Jim Hyland
Reba Barkley	Heather Lutz
Marlee Bidon	Candice Maynard
Malenda Broersma	George McClellan
Brinda Bromley	Harley Mossman
David Chaffin	Wayne Poole
Heather Corbett	Angelica Rodriguez
Penny Davis	Renee Rymer
Tannis Duncan	Mary Helen Seago
Matt Elston	Mike Seago
Abby Frazier	Debbie Shackelford
Gail Garland	Keri Shackelford
Nathan Greer	Phillip Trew
Julianne Hale	Laura Weldon
Bob Hardin	James Williams
Mary Jane Hardin	Cheryl Wilson
Lucia Hill	
Mary Holsomback	

Would you like to volunteer at The Caring Place?
 Contact Terri Williams,
 Volunteer Manager
 terri@thecaringplaceonline.org
 423- 472-4414

The Caring Place Staff:

Reba Terry, LCSW
Executive Director
 Heather Carlson, LMSW
Social Worker
 Julie Jones
Administrative Assistant
 Terri Williams
Volunteer Manager
 Sheila McElhaney
Warehouse Team Leader



A SYMPHONY OF SERVICE

The 2011 Volunteer Appreciation Banquet was a beautiful event which culminated in the awarding of the Perry Myers Humanitarian Award to Ted and Aileene Asprodites. Ted works in the food building assisting with packing, Wal-Mart runs, sorting food and anything else needed. Aileene works primarily in the clothing building, working the donation room, the sort/prep room and as with her husband, anything that needs to be done. This was the first year a couple tied for votes and it was a pleasure to recognize their hard work and dedication. Volunteer Manager, Terri Williams, said of the Asprodites, "They epitomize joyful giving which is the heart of volunteering."



Ted and Aileene Asprodites

Another first, volunteers with service records of five years or greater were recognized and given a certificate of service by Executive Director, Reba Terry. Honored were: Maggie Lewis, Joan O'Bannon, John and Mary Williams, Susan Miolen, Joyce and Lester Haar, Jim and Bettye Baldree, Veleta Loyd, Synthia Cain, Carolyn and Scott Arnold, Linda D'Armond, Mary Fisher, Louise Guinn, Alisa Miksa, Patty Callaway, Joan Thompson, and Mary Alice Usery.



Sarah Ringer

With the theme, A Symphony of Service, the event was set at the Peerless Road Church atrium and the tables were decorated by LaGenna Betts and family with musical instruments, sheet music, and musical notes. The evening began with a wonderful meal catered by Impression's. Entertainment was provided by violinist and volunteer Sarah Ringer, a Lee University and Covenant College faculty member who teaches music theory and string techniques. Sarah performed pieces by the composer Bach, as well as the hymn "Be Thou My Vision". Following the performance Debra Conner, the former Executive Director of OAR, spoke eloquently on the value of a volunteer.



2010 STATISTICS



The Caring Place served 3,316 unduplicated households in 2010. Of those 3,004 received 166 tons of food. Of those unduplicated households, 511 families received counseling or referrals by our social worker for services beyond food and clothing. Families of two or more members are eligible to receive services twice per month and singles once per month. In light of that it is interesting to note that our statistics show that clients only averaged 4.8 visits for 2010.

Of the families we served:

1,563 were single parent families	384 were senior citizens
38% were unemployed	148 were homeless
	32% were disabled

In 2010 our supporting churches grew from 56 to 64. We also saw an increase in businesses, clubs, and schools partnering with The Caring Place. We had an increase in volunteer applications, and currently have 120 active volunteers. God blessed us greatly in 2010 by allowing our ministry to families in need to grow, and He provided through the caring community of Bradley County.