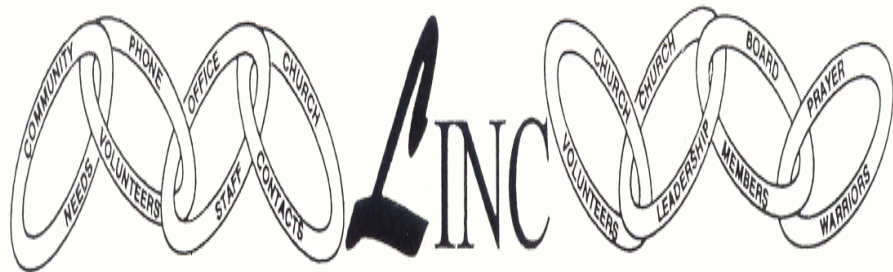




Love INC
Love In the Name of Christ



On the Spirit of Giving

Editor's Note: The following words, originally penned by Katherine Kirshberger of **Trinity Presbyterian Church**, were received too late for inclusion in the Spring *LINC*, where they perhaps would have been more appropriate. And then, we could have waited until the Fall issue as a prelude for the next Christmas season. But, in the end, we decided to publish the article at this time, for the lesson we hope you grasp isn't really seasonal; it is a matter of the heart, applicable year-round. When you finish reading, ask yourself, "How can I change the way I respond to those in need — and do so with a more living faith?"

“**W**hat good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:14-17)

While Christmas is certainly not the only time we are called to care for others, it's an easy time to show faith through action; the

spirit of giving abounds and needs are more publicized. Over the past few years, God has softened my heart toward those in need and shown me the abundance of riches He's given me.

He has convicted me with Paul's words: “But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that” (1 Tim. 6:8). When Christmas rolls around and people start asking for my wish list, these verse come back to me and prompt me to ask that my gifts be given to someone in need. I have food and clothing and will be content with that.

My family has also started *giving up* their presents, and this Christmas I was able to buy gifts on their behalf for a family I heard about through Love INC. The family originally consisted of a blind single mother and her elementary aged daughter, but a couple of weeks before Christmas the mother called to say that her sister had been put in jail and she now had custody of her two-year-old niece. A woman in need, helping those in even greater need.

I have a three-year-old niece, so I contacted my sister to see if

she had any clothes, toys or diapers that would be appropriate for this new addition to the family we were helping. She was able to put together some things my niece had outgrown, in particular a winter coat. My niece wondered what her mom was doing with her coat, so my sister explained to her that there was a little girl who didn't have a coat, who could wear this one that no longer fit her.



I'm not sure if my niece had ever heard of people who don't have everything they need, but her tender little heart was definitely grieved by this idea. She said she wanted to give her coat to the girl who didn't have one. She also decided to color a picture for the “little girl,” in case she didn't have any pictures.

I was touched by her thoughtfulness and generosity toward a little girl, like herself, who didn't have everything she needed. I was excited that she had seen the real meaning of Christmas and was hopeful that she would remember that spirit of giving in

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future Christmases. I thought that next year, when it's time to buy gifts for someone in need, I could remind her about the little girl she helped this year. But, I didn't expect that the lesson would stick year-round and yet it did.

The "little girl who doesn't have a coat" has become something of a legend in my sister's house. Just a few days ago, my niece put on her favorite skirt

and discovered that it no longer fit. Her first thought was that she should set it aside "for the little girl who doesn't have one."

We usually think that by giving to those in need during the holidays or at other times throughout the year, we are helping *them*. And we are. But I think those who give receive much more than we ever give away. We get to see young hearts learning to show compassion for

others. We get to break out of our materialism and cultivate a spirit of thankfulness for all we've been given rather than make lists of everything we want. We get to live out true faith. It really is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Thank you, Love INC, for making this Christmas a blessing to so many." ■

“Walking the Second Mile”

A dog this much out of control was hardly what any volunteer would anticipate in agreeing to come to the aid of an elderly couple. But, that was the unanticipated situation she faced, yet with godly patience she stuck in there for what turned out to be an unexpected conclusion. In fact, it was her unique position as a church volunteer that gave her the perception that others didn't have.

Typically, a social worker or Love INC staff -- not being "in the shoes" of the hurting individual or family -- has ears to hear the needs of the requestor with an eye toward finding a solution to what has been specifically expressed. In contrast, the volunteer -- just by their presence and their gentle words -- may be able to help the person in need change their own circumstances for the better in a way beyond what was originally perceived.

In this particular case, a volunteer, who felt called to help walk a dog, ended up helping a couple in need see that they should take another course of action. And now, to get into the story. It

all began in early February when a social worker called Love INC requesting help for an older gentleman whose wife was in the hospital.

The couple had acquired a puppy, but they were having trouble taking the dog for daily walks. So, on their behalf, the social worker asked if there were any volunteers for this sort of thing, sensing that it was an unsafe situation for the elderly couple, given the puppy's playfulness.

In response, a general e-mail was sent out from Love INC. And as often happens, the e-mail was sent to friends, then to friends of friends and beyond. Within a couple of weeks, there was a response from an attendee of **Maple Grove Christian Church** who lived in the very neighborhood. Julia went on to say: "I was wondering if you still needed a dog walker for the elderly couple. My friend forwarded the need to me Please reply! My girls and I would be happy to serve."

Within the week, this volunteer dog walker was at work. But it was soon apparent that the dog was not the happy bouncy puppy portrayed. In desperation, Julia tried to reach the social worker, then e-mailed the Love INC staff.

She said, "The dog is more than they can handle and has been trying to bite the woman. It has a ton of energy and just is not a good fit at all for this couple.



Further, they do not have a ton of flexibility. For example, I was six minutes late yesterday and she called to see if I was coming — after I had already confirmed that I was. The Lord is teaching me a ton about perspective these past few weeks. To them, six minutes must have seemed like an eternity when they have a crazy dog that needs to get out!

“The request was that someone come two times per day, 8 am

and 4:30 pm. My heart wants to commit to that, but we cannot and I am asking a few families to share the service. Yesterday, I walked the dog by myself, without my children. I know they got the dog from the SPCA and for them to be allowed to have this dog was a little crazy in my opinion. They need a calm lap dog or a cat. I am taking it one day at a time.”

With that disconcerting news, the Love INC staff hurriedly left a message for the social worker that they considered the dog a safety issue, not only for this couple, but potentially for the volunteer as well. Furthermore, she was told that the volunteer was willing to take the dog back to the SPCA and that she would assist them in finding a gentler, older dog.

But, unfortunately, the news got even worse. The next day, Julia informed Love INC that no other families could be found to assist and, furthermore, the dog had been getting too playful and had

bit the elderly woman’s ankles. “She showed me the bandages and said that she had been in the ER, as the bleeding would not stop.

“I asked her if the dog was too much for them and I shared that I was concerned that he could knock them over. She said she cannot train him at all. I think she likes the companionship a lot, but this dog is more than she bargained for. He’s out of control.

“He jumps, doesn’t sit or come to his name. It is a mix and cute, but just not a good fit. Perhaps I can help return him. The whole thing is sad. She asked me if she should return it to the SPCA. I asked if she would do that, but then she decided to try the dog for another month!”

Julia’s next thoughts were: “I will probe gently and suggest a different dog. Maybe she would take me up on making some calls to the SPCA, etc. Really,

this is a blessing for me and a lesson for my kids.”

And so, as the first of March rolled around, Julia found that she was still walking the dog, despite the pouring rain and the couple’s grumpiness. But, the story was about to take a welcome twist.

A week later Julia e-mailed Love INC again to report that the elderly gentleman had actually returned the dog to the SPCA! “I was glad they decided on their own; it was really the best decision for them” — and the social worker and Love INC staff were in full agreement on this one!

And as a reflection of the heart of one reaching out in love in the best interest of another, a saint willing to “go the second mile,” let us conclude with the last words in Julia’s e-mail: “If another request comes your way with this couple, please let me know. We have started to look forward to our time there each day.” ■

The Repairer of Broken Lives

“I’ll take anything that’s not nailed down.” That was her boast, made right in the middle of the Love INC office, and it fit the pattern she and the other Davis* girls had established for themselves. As a matter of fact, with bold audacity, they had been known to take personal sweaters or back pillows out of a chair while on their way out the office door.

While there are families where the cycle of poverty is repeated from generation to generation, and where the upcoming fami-

lies learn from their elders the pattern of “getting” from the system, the Davis girls “take the cake” for being the worst to deal with. They rise above their peers in finding ways to work every system for their advantage — legally or not.

The matriarch of the family, old long before her time, lives in public housing — as do many other family members. The current clan, comprised of the grandmother, the four daughters, a son -- in and out of jail -- six granddaughters and a host

of additional children, live in crowded conditions, with several generations piled on top of one another. Promiscuity, drugs, and alcohol are rampant. And sadly, we dare not imagine what happens to the children.

Henrietta was one of the worst in the city, crack cocaine addict, a prostitute. She was in and out of jail. Her children were in state custody until they got old enough to be on their own and live with aunts or their grandmother.

The Love INC staff used to dread the phone calls. “You never help me!” she would fume. Not so! The staff did try, but her phone was invariably out of service when the beds came through. The staff would get neighbors to attempt to take messages to her, but she wouldn’t be home.

Henrietta’s three sisters also wanted ‘stuff,’ as much as they could get and came often into the office “just to see what you have.”

They each just laughed when our staff suggested they go to church and gave them suggestions of churches where they might feel comfortable. “I already been baptized,” one of them said; “I don’t need no more than that.” Then the almost unbeliev-

able happened — a noticeable change in two of the Davis women was apparent. This past winter, Mira had found an apartment within her Section 8 voucher and she was looking for part of the security deposit. Mira had some news to share as well.

She sat down and told us how she had been going to church – “for real” she said! She told how she had told her boyfriend, “I won’t be doing no more shack-ing. This is against God”

She told us about things she had learned from the Bible for the first time ever. With those revelations, we asked, “Where are you going to church?” Mira shared that she and her sister were now attending **Shepherd’s Ministry International** in Zion Crossroads. Only after investi-

gation, we found it was Shepherd’s Ministry housed at **Crossroads Community Church**.

On Mira’s heels, Henrietta came in, all smiles, with the light of Christ shining all over her face. She too was learning about the Lord from the Bible and, in fact, she was teaching a class for some of the younger women. “I was such an evil woman,” she said. “I see what it did to the kids. Now I am trying to teach them differently.” Christ has made a difference in broken lives ■



** Names of those served have been changed throughout the newsletter to protect confidentiality*

Musing With the Clearinghouse Coordinator

Susan Shellito oversees all the volunteers in the Love INC office, but that is just “the tip of the iceberg” to describe all that is “on her platter.” She handles a huge amount of the referrals herself, speaks with agency case workers and church mercy coordinators and, very importantly, is a faithful prayer-warrior.

Recently, Susan shared some of what she did during April. As you read her comments that follow, you will begin to grasp the importance of her role in the ministry.

“Much of my time during April has been devoted to the **Love IN Concert - Day of Service** and to site visits with carpenters during which I pretended – not very successfully—to know what I

was doing! Many hours sending e-mails did not reach everyone I had hoped, but I did get enough responses to fill the projects.”

“I found a contractor to repair the stone and concrete stairs for an elderly woman. One site visit and I immediately realized that these repairs were not for volunteers! I got three bids. One was a wonderful Christian man with much stone work experience. I connected him to the family of the client. He will do a good job for them and can do the carpentry work that is so badly needed.

“This spring the Easter basket ministry of **Charlottesville First Assembly** made an impact as they put together 30 baskets for our clients. Even more important, they used that opportunity to visit and make connections

with families when they delivered the baskets.

“Another ministry currently taking shape is the diaper ministry. You may not realize that **Olivet Presbyterian** donates most of the hundreds of diapers that are given away through the Love INC office. The women of that church are working to take over the ministry part. They may deliver the diapers or find a place where young moms can come, where their children can play while volunteers talk with the moms.”

“I’ve been looking for volunteers to pick up and deliver food for shut-ins once a month. I found out that Tina from **University Baptist Church** has been working with her elderly man for two years now!”

Love IN Concert— Churches Serving “In Concert”

As you know, we chose to sponsor a day of service to the community instead of holding our **20th Annual Banquet**. Churches working “in concert” to serve the community was a huge success!

Grace Covenant Church— “Our cleanup of McIntire park trails and tree planting went well. We feel like we really accomplished something. The only room for improvement: we had perhaps a few too many volunteers such that all the work was done in about an hour. Many of us were expecting to work for a longer period of time. Other than that, it was clear what needed to be done, and we did it!”

All Points Church- “We had one very appreciative man...he spoke only (his native language) so his little daughter, about 8 years old, had to translate for us. He came out of his apartment and wanted to know what we were doing. He was so happy and grateful when his daughter told him that our church was serving him through Love INC. As a matter of fact, she told us her dad said, ‘No one would ever do that for anyone in (his home country).’ Then he went in and took a picture of the guys working in front of his apartment and his daughter said he was going to make that picture the “screen saver” on his computer!”

Northridge Community Church had almost their entire church body participating. They had 7 different projects plus a \$1,200 fund raiser for Love INC!

Charlottesville Mennonite Church— “We got a call from a

family member two days before we were to help (our man) plant a garden, saying that he had died the night before. He had fallen and went down hill from there. We won’t be working on our original plan, but if the family needs help to clear the house, some of us may be available to help out.”

Our Lady of Peace- (Chaplain) “My husband and I planted 45 flowers on Saturday. We saw groups of servants in several places on our way home. Hope it gave witness to the love of Christ!”

Portico Church— “My community group was truly blessed by the time we invested in the (housing project) community, so much so that we would like to continue serving that community.”

Maple Grove Christian Church
-Todd Cabell- “Our event went off without a hitch from an organizational standpoint. The communication went well and the event went well. We got a lot done for the school library at Jackson-Via Elementary. Ed note: the librarian, Amanda, said “Our day here at the Jackson Via Library was very successful! The volunteers came, I trained them on how to enter the books into the computer. Then they worked on entering books-books that have been here for years that we never had time to enter. They got over 2/3 of the bags of books done— WAY more than I ever imagined they would be able to get to! While most people were working on entering the books into computers, others were shelf-reading and getting

books in order. Still others were shelving books. It was a very successful day, and absolutely no problems!”

- Darlene Groome— “We cleaned our lady’s house from 9 to 12. We were able to spend some time talking with her. She told me about one of her neighbors who was in a wheel chair. She said there’s always someone worse off than you. I thought that was a pretty good attitude to have when you’ve been blind all of your life and now have cancer (and a child in jail). We prayed with her before we left.

- Andy Yost- “We still need to go back and stain the deck now that we have power washed it. Can you solicit the donation of a dark deck stain? Additionally needed for this home, but not as urgent, is new skirting for the entire trailer.”

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Love INC is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit ministry that links people in need to volunteers from a network of area churches.

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