



Celebrating Mothers: Adorned

By Anne Byl

Titus 2:10b

... so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Mother's Day festivities came to The Ladder on May 10 with a delicious lunch prepared by Ladder staff and volunteers and served by several of our youth. The meal consisted of Chicken Cordon Bleu, Mashed Potatoes, salad, vegetable, roll and dessert.

Following lunch, we shared a devotion with the group, which focused on making the Gospel attractive to others, so they believe it, receive it, profess it, and walk it with Christ. In keeping with the theme, many of the ladies who attended "adorned" themselves with colorful scarves. To the delight of our guests, our Youth and Men's Coach, Troy Love, played the part of game show host in a friendly round of Mother's Day Family Feud to finish off the event in fun fashion.



Left:
55 people attended the Mother's Day Luncheon, including a few husbands.

Right:
35 people attended the Father's Day Dinner, including a youth and 2 wives.



Celebrating Fathers: The Brave of the Home

By Troy Love

It has been rightly repeated that we, as a nation, are the land of the free because we are the home of the brave. We honor those who were willing to do hard things and sacrifice so that we may benefit. Their bravery inspires us, and we call them heroes. This is their legacy.

On June 18, The Ladder hosted a Father's Day dinner for 35 guests to celebrate fatherhood with a delicious meal, gifts, and some trivia. I delivered a devotional about the importance of leaving a legacy of bravery.

Jesus provided the best example of bravery by doing hard things and sacrificing to benefit others. When we receive Jesus, we also get His brave Spirit. By following Jesus' example, we—as fathers—can do hard things and sacrifice so that others may benefit. We need to be the "Brave of the Home" and pass bravery on to the next generation. When our children and grandchildren are asked, "What did you get from your father and grandfather?", I pray that they will say, "They gave me bravery." Bravery is what the next generation is going to need. Men, let's leave that legacy!

Summer Fam Fest

By Mechele Martinez Gonzales

Our Summer Fam Fest, which is also our Parent Appreciation celebration, took place on June 24. We had 9 youth, 10 volunteers, 4 staff, 9 parents, 4 grandparents, and 4 children attend. That's 40 people who experienced the amazing things that happen at The Ladder! Our youth prepped, assisted in cooking, and served a spaghetti dinner to their parents and families. After dinner, the youth also cleared tables and washed dishes. They showed great respect and honor to their families.

During our time of devotion, Coach Love talked about how grateful we are for parents, the importance of children honoring their parents, and the need for parents to have strong healthy relationships with their children. It is important to equip parents and their children with God's Word and tools to strengthen their relationships with each other and with Jesus Christ. Passersby may have seen us outside playing a game of water balloon volleyball with bed sheets; some may have even chuckled as they saw us throwing water balloons at Coach Love, who was our human target. We got to know one another a little better through great conversations, laughs, and fun.



Left:
Coach Love was a good sport in getting hit with water balloons by Jaycie. Jayleigh watched with a concerned look on her face.

Right:
People of all ages took part in playing a competitive, fun game of water balloon volleyball.



CELEBRATING LIFE

Carol “Sue” Smith

February 20, 1939—June 7, 2024

By Brian Beckman

Sue was a gift to so many people, but especially to The Ladder family. She started to attend The Ladder shortly after it opened in February 2016. Her friendly smile and her willingness to engage people made her an asset to this new community center. In February 2017, Sue became a volunteer. She warmly greeted people in the café and kept the coffee brewing. She also introduced many people to The Ladder, inviting them to show up when she was volunteering. When they came, she treated them with good old-fashioned hospitality.

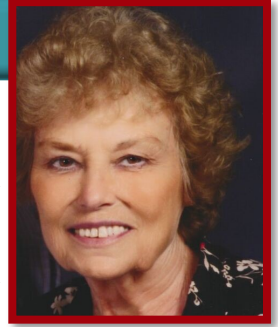
Nearly every time Sue came, her sister and brother-in-law, Mert and Millie Bays, would come walk our indoor track and have coffee with her. Often Sue or Millie would bring a treat for everyone. Sue’s kindness was contagious.

Sue also served meals for The Ladder’s lunch program. She was comfortable in The Ladder’s kitchen, having spent many years working in the kitchen at Shelby Hospital. Sue could bring fun to any situation, even in mundane kitchen work. The staff had many laughs with her serving food. When we were short volunteers, she would be on-call to jump in and help when her schedule permitted. In addition to helping at The Ladder, she volunteered at Love INC and watched her grandsons.

Sue spoke of her family often, especially her children and grandchildren. She also spoke of how she enjoyed Lucas Porter, a young elementary student who would come across the road to visit her often. She would say, “He is such nice boy.” Michelle Deuling, The Ladder’s Office and Kitchen Manager, fondly recalls, “Sue always had a story to tell that brought a smile to your face.”

Sue’s last time volunteering at The Ladder was December 17, 2019. A short time later, we got word that she had a stroke. This was a hard pill to swallow because we had grown to love her for the delightful lady she was to each person. The staff missed her tremendously, but we prayed for her regularly. It was hard for Sue to accept life away from home, but her family loved her well as she spent the last years of her life at the Oceana County Medical Care Facility.

We extend our thoughts and prayers to Sue’s family. She was a gift to The Ladder, and her hospitality lives on. We praise God for Sue!



Latricia “Trish” Varney

July 7, 1956—June 12, 2024

By Cathy Zoulek & Robin Snider

Trish Varney was connected to The Ladder through her service as a prayer partner in our Kid’s Hope program. She was born in Shelby and lived here her entire life. Trish grew up on a farm and was known by many as a spitfire redhead. But that’s not how she was known to the people who had a personal relationship with her. To them she was so much more than that! Trish’s friend, Robin Snider, recently shared this heartfelt description of Trish’s impact in her life—and many others’ lives, as well:

Trish Varney was a very good friend of mine. We attended the same Adult Sunday School class for many years. She even led the class for quite a while. She quickly became someone I could count on when I needed to vent my frustrations and when I needed a compassionate, listening ear.

I did not know Trish personally before she decided to follow Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, but she has told me stories that I promised not to tell anyone, and vice versa! She would be the first to tell you that her life changed when she made that commitment to her LORD and Savior. She would always be a spitfire redhead and admitted she was not perfect, but the Trish I came to know and love was determined to live the life Christ wanted her to live. She embraced her faith, her family, and her church family. She was focused on her relationship with Christ and others. She was fun and funny, yet one of the hardest working women I knew.

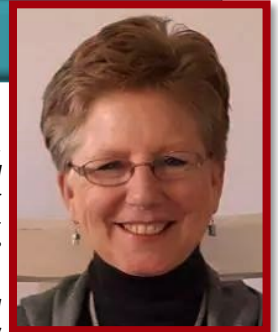
Trish talked about the return of Jesus quite some time before she got cancer. She truly looked forward to the day when she would meet Him face to face. Her life reflected what she learned from the Bible and what she believed. She was a conduit of the Holy Spirit in so many ways. She prayed for

those who needed prayer and did things for people who needed things done. She was a faithful church attendee, sang in the choir, and taught and took part in many Bible studies and leadership groups. She served Christ in any way she could.

Trish was in my text messaging group that I call my “People of Peace” because she was one of my closest friends and a fierce prayer warrior. I can’t even imagine how many lives were unknowingly blessed by the prayer requests I’ve sent to that group of five ladies. Whenever I asked for help with anything, Trish would help me. From coming to my house when I had a problem, to phone calls in the middle of the night. From dressing up and going to a fundraiser, to helping make applesauce and canning tomatoes. From encouraging me to be strong, to asking for dental advice. From making food for open houses and other events, to sitting with me in church. Her help was endless.

Even when she herself was ailing, she selflessly served. In the last several months of her disease, she gave a young man a ride to help him purchase Christmas presents for his mom, and after the New Year, gave his mom rides to places she needed to go also.

Trish was a true helper/servant. She helped many people, and many people trusted her judgement. She was a strong, wise, and obedient follower of Jesus Christ (not unlike Deborah of the Bible) and a wonderful friend whom I will miss dearly.



Don Taylor

February 26, 1946—June 26, 2024

By Holly Baxter

Don always made sure to say hello to The Ladder’s staff when he came in to sing and play his drum during our Friday morning Jam Session. His face would light up with joy as he told us about his latest hunting and fishing trips and what he was harvesting from his garden that week. He showed genuine interest in how our gardens were performing that season and what we were concocting in our kitchens from our produce harvest. Don generously shared the fruits of his labors with others, offering his friends at The Ladder his famous “Taylormaid” pickles and rhubarb wine.

Don and his brother Randy had a close relationship. They hunted and fished together, sang at The Ladder together, went to athletic games together, and much more. “He was a real good person—my best friend,” said Randy.

Randy shared that he had been talking to Don about the LORD since 1967. When Don was diagnosed with inoperable bone marrow cancer just a few short weeks before he died, Randy once again shared the Gospel with him. “We talked and we prayed. I told him, ‘I believe God can heal you, but if he

chooses not to, you need to get right with the LORD.”

Only God knows what Don decided in his heart. We as Christ followers have the important duty to be a witness to others of how the LORD has changed our lives. “Maybe that’s why God has kept me around, so I can give my testimony to one more person,” said Randy.

Shortly before Don passed, Randy asked what he could do for him, to which Don replied, “Pray for my family.” We invite all who are reading this newsletter to pray for the families of Don, Sue, and Trish. And never underestimate the power of your testimony to someone who doesn’t know Jesus. “Preach the Word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2)

