

'Let There be Mom' leaves legacy

By Krista Gibson
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You've been given only a few months to live. Suddenly you have so much to say and give and so little time to do it.

The burden of the disease has left you full of ideas, but stripped of the strength to deliver them to the ones you love the most.

How will they remember you?

"Let There Be Mom" (LTBM) was created just under two years ago for just this time in a woman's life. When doctors have decided that a mother's illness is life threatening and without medical treatment, her life expectancy is two years or less, LTBM steps in to help establish that mother's legacy.

"They are focused on spending as much time as possible with their families and they are focused on their health," said Kipra Anderson, founder and president of LTBM.

Lurking beneath their focus, though, is always the "What if I don't make it?" question and the thought, "I don't want them to forget me." "We focus on this so that they can focus on their family and health," Anderson said.

The spark that started the flame for Anderson was a disturbing moment in October of 2006.

"I became overwhelmed as I envisioned myself being diagnosed with a serious illness and given only a short amount of time to live. There was so much to do, to organize, to say, to plan, to make happen. I was under enormous stress and I was only imagining this scenario."

Two months later, Anderson met a mom at her child's school who was 29 and afraid that she may be spending the last Christmas with her children because of her illness.

I decided that this intense desire to bring peace to those who were actually facing this reality was something I needed to pursue, Anderson said.

Anderson started "Let There Be Mom" in Jan. 2007.

The group had planned its first fundraiser for October but in August, Hospice called and the group began its work with a mom given only about a month to live. Using funds from sponsors that had already given to the program, the volunteer group worked speedily to complete many of the things the mother had hoped to have in place for her daughter.

By the time the first fundraiser rolled around in October, LTBM had two more moms that they were helping.

That fundraiser, "Dine Out For Mom", is the nonprofit group's biggest moneymaker. The group will hold the same event next week on Thursday, Oct. 23. Twenty-four area restaurants are participating in the day-long event.

To contribute to the organization, simply join family and friends for a night out to eat at one of the chosen restaurants. A portion of the money spent will be given to LTBM.

A new feature this year is that all of the restaurants have donated "two for one" meal certificates which will be used in a drawing. Diners can enter to win one of 10 bundles of five certificates when they eat out at the restaurants.

For each mom, LTBM gives three months and spends \$3,000. So far, they have served six moms, one dad and have created legacies for 15 children.

“Our big thing is that it has to be a unique legacy for the person,” Anderson said.

Along with the basics like scrapbooks, journals, picture DVD’s, videos and quilts, the mom chooses what she wants to leave. All family members receive a silver charm of the mom or dad’s thumbprint.

The money may be used to build a place of reflection for the children like one mom requested. All of the mother’s favorite flowers were planted near her favorite tree with an area for the children to come and sit.

A pillow was made with one son’s clothing and on it written a message from the mom. She also tucked a lock of her hair inside.

Monica Pryor, a mom the group is serving, requested studio time to record her music for her children. Also, that the piano she owns, handed down to her from her grandmother, be fixed for her daughter.

Another is writing a book and she has been paired with a published author.

“It’s just amazing how God put everything into place,” Anderson said. “It works so well on paper, but to see it in place is great.”

Volunteers are the heart and soul of LTBM. With what they have to do, Anderson said there could never be too many.

“Those people who can fly by the seat of their pants, we need them.”

When dealing with people with grave illnesses there may be days when the mom doesn’t feel up to having several people come to her house. Volunteers must be able to adjust.

“It’s hard,” Anderson said of getting involved in the lives of those who are dying.

“There are children involved and the love of their lives involved,” she said. “But the reward is great and we know we are offering peace in a time of crisis. None of us is going to live forever and some of us have the opportunity to know it’s coming. We help them put things in place.”

Participating area restaurants

* Atlanta Bread Company

Azia

Baker's Bagels & Deli

* Bellacino's Pizza & Grinders

Boston Pizzeria

* Bruster's Ice Cream

Chophouse '47

City Range Steakhouse Grill

Doc Chey's Asian Kitchen

* Firehouse Subs

* Five Guys Burger and Fries

* Flat Rock Grille

The Great Bay Oyster House

The Lazy Chicken

Lieu's Chinese Bistro

McAlisters Deli

* Moe's Southwest Grill
The Open Hearth
Overlook Grill
Paisanos Italian Pizzeria & Restaurant
Pawleys Charcoal Steakhouse
Rick Erwin's West End Grille
Salsarita's Mexican Cantina
Starbucks Coffee

* Visit Web site for location and directions