Adding a little “Frozen” Magic to the Holiday Season

Remembering Ben Batey, A Legacy of Love
Adding a Little “Frozen” Magic to the Holidays

By Kaitlin Wright

Disney’s hit film, “Frozen,” starring animated princesses Anna and Elsa continues to be near the top of almost every little girl’s list of favorite things. For 7-year-old Keily Torres-Guzman, “Frozen” was even her choice of birthday party theme, but unfortunately, Keily, who spent 2.5 months in the hospital undergoing treatment for Leukemia, was too sick to enjoy a big celebration.

When Keily was admitted to Hoffmann Hospice at the beginning of December, her nurses quickly learned of Keily’s admiration of the “Frozen” movie and its characters, and soon, Hoffmann Hospice decided to work a little of their own Disney magic.

On December 23rd, Hoffmann Hospice social worker, Michael Pawloski, dressed up as the laughable snowman character, Olaf from “Frozen” and paid Keily a visit. Michael, along with volunteer Alison Martin dressed as Elsa, surprised Keily and her family with gifts.

“We all believe in this because quality of life is so important to us here at Hoffmann and sometimes that means going above and beyond our regular job,” said Michael.

Michael said when Keily saw Olaf and Elsa standing in her home, she was quietly shocked. Naturally more on the shy side, Keily soon warmed up to the fact that her favorite characters were there to read stories with her and watch her open presents.

“This was more special than all of our other Christmases,” said Veronica. “It made me so happy just to see her face. The whole family loved it.”

Through special service projects such as Keily’s “Frozen”-themed Christmas, the Hoffmann team stands by their mission to provide compassionate care. Whenever possible, they hope to help families create happy memories.

“Honestly, this is why I do what I do,” said Michael. “I’m just dressing up as Olaf, I’m not a doctor, but it makes a difference. Just looking at Keily’s mom holding back tears, I know that.”

Along with this special December gift, Hoffmann Hospice does what they can to regularly help their patients find joy in their lives. Sometimes it’s the small things that can make a world of difference in a persons life.

“They (Hoffmann) make people really happy,” said Veronica. “For Keily her dreams came true.”

* Special thank you to Roy Sekine for photography.

A Close Knit Group of Volunteers

By Kaitlin Wright

Every Monday night, Valley Baptist Church becomes a hub for care and creativity when 10 or more women, armed with yarn, knitting needles, fabric and thread, meet to craft items for patients at Hoffmann Hospice. The group makes neck pillows, walker bags, adult bibs, catheter bags, chemo caps, and small, doll-like creations called Ouchie Buddies.

The idea for the “Handmade Care and Comfort” ministry originated with Lois Ledbetter who said she had been praying for something to be involved in when a random phone call with a cousin turned her on to the idea.

“I feel like it’s something the Lord just opened up to us,” said Lois.

Eleanor was soon appointed coordinator of the group and the evening of fellowship, sewing and knitting began. Eventually, Hoffmann Hospice was selected as the recipient of the ministry’s efforts because Eleanor remembered the remarkable care her husband received under Hoffmann several years ago.

“There’s something so special to me about volunteering in this way,” said Eleanor. “I feel like we’re able to give our service directly to the Lord.”

The women in this ministry at Valley Baptist are part of Hoffmann Hospice’s ever-growing volunteer network that recruits compassionate individuals to help with a variety of different jobs and services. These types of people help Hoffmann Hospice provide care above and beyond great medical attention.

Volunteer positions at Hoffmann range from completing yard work or providing transportation, to planning birthday celebrations or simply offering companionship and conversation.

“All my life I was used to being busy, but now that I’m retired I like to have something meaningful like this to do regularly,” said Eleanor.

Although the women rarely meet the patients that receive the homemade gifts that they make, they say it is satisfaction enough knowing their work might bring someone some measure of comfort.

“It fulfills a need in my life personally and I’d feel sort of lost without this,” said Lois. “I was raised up wanting to help people and with this ministry we’re really helping and serving a purpose together.”
“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

- Matthew 19:6 [NIV]

In the book of Matthew, Jesus talks about marriage being the joining together of two individuals. Ben and Gayle Batey are an example of two individuals that truly joined together as one. They found that for a successful marriage “two personalities must meld by making decisions which are good for the whole, not just for one half of the whole. It takes a long time and hard work. Sometimes we fail and must start again. However, a marriage of many years is a treasure worth the work.” Hard work and a little bit of luck brought Ben and Gayle together.

Gayle Batey counts herself as one of the lucky ones. Gayle met the love of her life Ben Batey in class one day at Vanderbilt University and they married shortly after graduation. They began their lives and careers together as teachers. A few years later Gayle was by Ben’s side as his wife and business partner as they began a new chapter in their lives and ventured into real estate. Ben was blessed with a love for his work as a local builder and helped develop much of northwest Bakersfield. Ben’s humility and willingness to genuinely listen to what others had to say made him well respected by everyone that knew him. He built homes that families take pride in owning to this day. As the years passed Ben and Gayle’s own family also grew to include three children and numerous grandchildren.

Through the years Ben and Gayle faced life’s challenges by holding onto each other. Gayle stayed by Ben’s side admiring him as he fought the limitations of Parkinson’s and dementia for a number of years. As their time together neared the end, Hoffmann Hospice stepped in to comfort Ben and support Gayle. Ben Batey took his last breath at 2:30 AM on August 1, 2014 at home with Gayle by his side. Gayle then had to decide what to do now that her other half was gone.

extension of each other, and the story survives long after they have passed on through actions symbolic of their deep love. Naming a patient suite honoring her sunshine, her special man, and her best friend, Ben Batey, was one of the ways Gayle and her children chose to honor his life. This gift is now a blessing for patients and families staying in the Ben Batey memorial suite at the Hoffmann Hospice Home. A blessing that allows the last hours of someone else’s life to be spent surrounded by love and family - all because of the love Ben and Gayle Batey shared.

If you’re lucky, a love like the Batey’s comes around once in a lifetime. When two people share such a bond they become a natural
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Open to the public

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