



Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7 NIV

Bethany Christian Services *Winter 2006*

insider

the cheerful giver

This article is written by one of our generous board members, Jamie Clary. While his humility shows throughout his story, he is a person our office has called upon many times to help in countless ways. He is a wonderful example of a cheerful giver and offers a resounding "Yes" to our many requests! From telling his story to prospective adoptive parents at our orientation...to answering phones at the office during our staff retreat...to representing Bethany at community adoption events, Jamie has happily donated his time, energy, and enthusiasm to Bethany's ministries. We are grateful for all that he does for our office!

When I begin my presentations to Middle Tennesseans who are interested in adopting children through Bethany Christian Services, I start out by telling them, "I was adopted." From there, my talk explains how my adoptive parents told me from the time that I was 11 days old that I was chosen. I also tell the audience about my three sisters, my nieces, and my nephew, and how full my life has always been. Then I switch gears to tell future Bethany parents about my decision to find my biological medical history.

"The social worker called me at work and told me, 'I have contacted your biological mother, and she has agreed to fill out the medical forms.'" I felt some relief, a little joy. The social worker added, "Your biological mother asked if she could contact you." I was speechless because I never considered the possibility of talking to my birthmother. Asked point blank if the woman who gave birth to me 25 years earlier could contact me, I didn't have a prepared answer. I paused to think. Then I heard myself say, "I owe her that."

"Whenever they ask for anything else, I do my best to step forward."

Middle Tennessee | Tammy Delle, Branch Director
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My biological mother and I traded letters and followed up with phone calls. Now we make regular trips to see each other. While friends were adding children to their families, I was adding a parent in mine and gaining new relatives.

In 2003, I received an e-mail from Bob Lawhon. The two of us had gone through a training program for future leaders of non-profit organizations. His e-mail asked if anyone was interested in serving on the local board of Bethany Christian Services. I thought for a second and realized, *I owe them that.*

During my first meeting, I met the other directors on the Bethany board. One was in the paperwork phase of adopting a Bethany baby. A unique situation developed during the meeting, and that board member was asked if she was ready to take a child home *that night*. The topic was revisited sporadically during the meeting, became increasingly serious, and peaked with the board member calling home for her husband. Within a week, she and her husband were welcoming the newborn into their family.

I was scared to go to my next board meeting. *Would I be next?* I was willing to give to Bethany but was not prepared to take a child home. Nevertheless, I attended board meetings regularly for a year. Once a month, I showed up, nodded my head a lot, and gave a few ideas. No babies were thrust upon me.

With new commitments, though, I headed into two years as the "absentee board member." My attendance is surely the worst of any non-profit board member since the beginning of time. I still feel that I owe Bethany my resources, but the resources have changed.

I do not hide from my absenteeism and have invited Bob to replace me several times. I mention my absenteeism here because I want to give full disclosure of my involvement with Bethany. I am proud to help; I just don't have

a schedule that allows me to make it to many board meetings. So, whenever they ask for anything else, I do my best to step forward.

When the Bethany staff needed help moving a client soon after giving birth, I reasoned that God was calling me and my truck. When another client needed some furniture, God must have been calling my truck and my couch. They needed a bed; I thought about giving my own bed until I found one at the local thrift store. I have solicited donations for a golf tournament, spoken to church groups, hooked up computer equipment, bought school supplies, moved file cabinets, and taken staff to lunch. I owe them that.

I admit that my giving—if eating lunch can be considered giving—is the high visibility type. Volunteers who attend board meetings, balance financial statements, and write long-term plans should be praised for handling the mundane, but necessary, tasks. They sit in an office and look at numbers. I'm seeing birthmothers, hearing stories from the staff, and talking to people. Who wouldn't want to do this kind of work?

Possibly Tammy, our executive director, has figured out my personality well enough to understand my commitment as a volunteer: I have a hard time saying no, I have a truck, I have a hard time sitting still, and I like to see people smile. Often something little from me provides something huge to somebody else.

Knowing the difficulties people face and seeing them smile make my small efforts worth it.

When the day comes for my tenure on the board to end, I will still give my time like I do now. I owe Bethany that.



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