

LIFEnotes

We Will Always Love You Dolly



Dear Friends,

I had the great honor and privilege of meeting Dolly Parton and watching her perform a little over 30 years ago, when Gene (my now late husband) and I hosted a charity ball for the JFK Hospital near Lantana. We invited Dolly to join us and much to our delight, she came and headlined the fundraiser at The Breakers. Like everyone in the room, I adored her music – I think I knew enough of the lyrics that I sang along to her songs as she performed them.

But what was most memorable for me – what I vividly recall even three decades later – was her grace, her sincerity, her humility, how down-to-earth she was. Dolly was already a global superstar but she loved and was so committed to the wellbeing and welfare of children that she was willing to lend her name and her voice to help us support that little hospital.



Shirley MacLaine, Daryl Hannah, Sally Field, Dolly Parton, and Julia Roberts attend the New York City premiere of "Steel Magnolias" at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York City on Nov. 5, 1989. Vinnie Zuffante—Getty Images

I tell you this because over the next days and weeks, we will read, watch, and listen to heartfelt, inspiring, and poignant tributes to Dolly Parton. They will come from heads of state and celebrities; they will come from singers and actors; they will come from business leaders and philanthropists, and they will come from everyday people, from all walks of life. Such was Dolly's life and legacy and the countless people she touched in her 80 years of this Earth.

Much of what you will learn is about her music catalog; it was prodigious and possibly unprecedented. I read that she wrote and performed more than 3,000 songs over her legendary career. We all have our favorites, from "Jolene" to "Coat of Many Colors," from "9 to 5" to "I Will Always Love You."

We will also hear and read about her equally memorable film career: Her hits on the silver screen counted among them, "Steel Magnolias," "Rhinestone," "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," "A Smoky Mountain Christmas," and of course, "9 to 5."



It couldn't have been easy for Dolly, especially as a woman in an industry totally dominated by men and decades before the #metoo movement exposed demeaning, atrocious, and illegal practices like the 'casting couch.' As a young Broadway performer and actress, I certainly knew of these abhorrent behaviors.

But for me – and I hope for you as well -- Dolly was much more than her multitude of songs, her myriad movies, and even her business savvy, acumen and successes, of which there were also many – hotels, the Dollywood amusement park, her music publishing company, to name but a few.

Rather, it was the Dolly who came and performed for that JFK Hospital fundraiser in 1984 that set her apart as a role model for me and I believe for all women as a humanitarian -- for how to live a life truly fulfilled and profoundly meaningful. Like many of her age, she grew up in a post-Depression, post-World War II era with little more than the clothes of her back.



Dolly Parton and Brian Wells, Executive Editor of the National Enquirer at the 1984 JFK Gala.



Dolly Parton visits Dollywood in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, in 1987. John Seakwood—Disney General Entertainment Content/Getty Images

Yet, as she began to make a name for herself in her early teens as a singer – she debuted at the legendary Grand Ole Opry at the tender age of 13, introduced to the country music world by none other than Johnny Cash, she began to carry family, friends, colleagues, and others on that back with her generosity of spirit and philanthropy.

Indeed, she built a transformative, global philanthropic legacy, giving away hundreds of millions of dollars focused on educational equity, healthcare research, disaster relief, and childhood literacy – her Imagination Library, for example, has gifted millions of books to children across the globe in honor of her father, who she says never learned to read but nevertheless was also very smart.

Interestingly, the areas on which she focused her humanitarianism are among the very same ones that LIFE has committed to over the 33 years of our Annual Lady in Red Gala. Perhaps that is why I always felt a kinship with Dolly, one dating back to that day we first met. We had similar interests with our philanthropy, especially for the health and well-being of children.



One of the lyrics of “I Will Always Love You,” the iconic tune she wrote that later became the most famous song performed by Whitney Houston (and a song the Elvis wanted to record but for which Dolly smartly wouldn’t sell him the rights), goes:

*“I hope life treats you kind
And I hope you have all you've dreamed of
And I wish you joy and happiness
But above all this, I wish you love.”*

May all of us wish Dolly these very things in eternity. It’s what she deserves, what she has earned. And I know I speak for you in saying, “Dolly, we will always love you.”



Dolly Parton with children who receive books from her Imagination Library program, at the Magna Science Adventure Centre in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. Rui Vieira—PA Images/Getty Images



More Than a *Million* Reasons to Celebrate **LIFE**



I was out in the garden when inspiration struck for a theme for this month's LIFE Notes. September's "birth flower" is an Aster, with its star-shaped flower head, a bright yellow center and various colors of petals, including purple, pink, blue, red and white. They brighten any garden and any mood.

Interestingly, the September "birthstone" is the Sapphire, which, of course, is famous for its rich, deep blue shade – although this gorgeous, durable gemstone comes in a wide rainbow of colors, including (like the Aster) pink, yellow, green and white.

But deeper than just their outward beauty, both Asters and Sapphires have something in common. They represent wisdom, faith, patience, loyalty, truth, and love. This is what they have in common with all of you – collectively, these are defining, cherished and admirable characteristics that all of you, our LIFE supporters, possess in abundance.

I know this to be true because of your profound and abiding commitment to the myriad organizations your generosity benefits through your support of LIFE. In fact, you are LIFE's own "Asters" and "Sapphires" because your largesse helps propel the essential work these organizations do in the community for the greater good. To be sure, these organizations can only continue to glow like the gems they are – and continue to grow like the flowers they are – because of your beneficence.

Consider the impact of the Lois' Food4Kids program at Palm Beach County Food Bank, an impact your philanthropy has engendered! Six years ago, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, I read about an alarming problem right here in our own backyard: 1 in 5 children in both Palm Beach and Broward Counties didn't have enough food to eat every day and were going to bed hungry. The problem was especially acute when children were not in school – vacations, holidays, summer and winter breaks, weekends, etc. – and therefore unable to avail themselves of free or reduced-price breakfast and lunch.



That was the impetus for the creation of Lois' Food4Kids. You support this gem of an initiative through LIFE's Annual Lady in Red Gala, including this year's 33rd Lady in Red on Sunday, March 14, 2027, at The Breakers, which stars comedy icons Jay Leno and Rita Rudner. Lois' Food4Kids provides backpacks filled with healthy and nutritious food, snacks and drinks to bridge the gap for children when schools are closed and free breakfast and lunch are not accessible.

Over the past six years, the child hunger gap in our area has slightly narrowed. Indeed, thanks to our collective generosity, more than 36,000 area children have received these backpacks. And when their stomachs are filled, their brains also benefit – they can learn better and grow and thrive like the flowers they are. To better ensure that the children – and all county residents in need – have even greater access to fresh fruit, produce, dairy and other fresh perishables, I donated a large refrigerated truck to the food bank to expand its storage and distribution system.



Like the finest jewelers and gardeners in the land, your generosity in support of LIFE's Lady in Red has brought the brightest sparkle to another gem, another magnificent flower, in our region: the Lois' Vision4Kids program, in partnership with Bascom-Palmer Eye Institute. Just as children can't learn if they are going to school with hunger in their bellies, they also can't learn if they can't see what the teacher has written on the blackboard or whiteboard or read what is on their homework assignments because of vision problems. So, two years ago, Lois' Vision4Kids began hosting free eye screenings for all children ages 2 to 18 in the region a few times a year. If those screenings determined that the children needed prescription eyewear, they received not one but two free pairs, plus a pair of prescription sunglasses.

Thanks to this program – thanks to your Aster-like and Sapphire-like faith, wisdom, loyalty, love, and support of the Lady in Red – more than 750 children can now “see” their way to a better future, a better life for themselves. Lois' Vision4Kids will again benefit from this year's gala.



Speaking of how the same qualities that define Asters and Sapphires represent all that you epitomize and how these characteristics are wonderfully manifested on the ground, I want to share some fabulous news about Tri-County Animal Rescue and, specifically, the veterinary center that bears my name there – another beneficiary of the Lady in Red. Our dear friend Suzi Goldsmith, the founder and chair, proudly told me that Tri-County Animal Rescue just received a \$1 million grant from PetSmart Charities through its Accelerator program to help expand access to affordable veterinary care through the Lois Pope Pet Clinic.

The PetSmart Charities Accelerator program is a highly selective initiative designed to identify and invest in a small group of organizations with the potential to create meaningful, sustainable change in veterinary care. Tri-County Animal Rescue was selected as one of only 10 organizations across the entire country to participate, making this recognition especially significant. Already, Tri-County has been able to expand the Clinic's medical capabilities, including the addition of a surgeon and increased access to procedures that previously may have required referrals to significantly more expensive specialty hospitals.

The next phase of the grant will focus on strengthening the Clinic for the future. Plans include upgrading technology and medical infrastructure, improving scheduling and workflow, expanding the veterinary team, increasing outreach to underserved pet owners, and finding new ways to make quality veterinary medicine more accessible and affordable. Already, the Clinic provides all levels of medical, health, dental, diagnostic and surgical care – for free or at greatly reduced fees – for some 1,200 dogs, cats and other animals each month.



Ultimately, this grant is about more than expanding a veterinary clinic. It is about keeping pets out of shelters, preventing unnecessary euthanasia, helping families stay together, and creating a model of accessible veterinary care that can make a difference far beyond our own community.

All of you, through your support of LIFE and our Lady in Red gala, are helping to actualize that difference, saving and transforming countless thousands of lives in our region. Talk about the magnificent bloom of Asters... talk about the deep and durable beauty of Sapphires – this and much more is why I so cherish our friendship and....

Love Always,

Lois



LOIS POPE AND THE BOARD OF LIFE
INVITE YOU TO A



MASQUERADE

AT LIFE'S 33RD ANNUAL

LADY IN RED GALA

**SUNDAY,
MARCH 14, 2027
6PM**



THE BREAKERS PALM BEACH

ENJOY AN EVENING OF COMEDY

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COMEDY ICON

JAY LENO

AND

COMEDIENNE EXTRAORDINAIRE

RITA RUDNER

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during cocktails, a gourmet dinner,
and dancing to music of the
Danny Beck Band!*

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