



*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
— 2 Corinthians 9:6-8*

A close friend from my high school days shared this story. His son is one of the beneficiaries of the generosity by the woman who stands at the center of this amazing tale. I'm sure he won't mind that I'm passing it along as this Monday's devotion, nor that I've done a bit of editing for this particular format.

Dreams do come true! Eleven years ago a social worker named Mim Conway came into a very large inheritance. Instead of splurging on herself she formed a foundation called Dream On Kids. Then, she decided to adopt an entire first grade class from Nottingham Elementary School in the Collinwood neighborhood. There were 27 unique six year-olds in the class.

Conway promised these children and their families that each would have their entire college educations paid for in full if they graduated from high school.

Through the years those 27 individual families have become ONE FAMILY by way of the many educational and social activities sponsored and financed by the Dream On Kids Foundation. Here are just a few examples:

- Early co-ed baseball.
- Intense tutoring for all.
- Summer camp each year at the best facilities in Northeast Ohio.
- Music lessons, and instruments at the acclaimed Music Settlement.
- A Dream On Kids Jazz Band under the direction of Randy Ar-Rae Woods, the director of the Shaw High School Jazz Band.
- Computers and internet access for each student.
- Leadership training classes.
- Summer school classes at Hathaway Brown and University School.

- Uniforms, umpire fees and entrance costs for a Suburban teen baseball team.
- A trip to South America.
- Many Career Days.
- Tours and selection of High Schools. The students attended high schools all over Northeast Ohio depending on their interest.
- College tours.
- Consultants for FAFSA and fees paid for college applications.

Not everything was rosy for these families during the past eleven years. There were unexpected deaths, house fires, academic struggles, homelessness, and family conflicts. But they supported each other, loved each other, and encouraged each other. And now they are celebrating together because ALL 27 students graduated from high school last week. ALL 27 are heading to colleges and universities across the country. My friend's son is headed to Morehouse College, one of the most well-known and respected HBCU's in the nation.

And it all started with the generosity of one woman who had enough love in her heart and faith in God to invest in the lives of 27 kids who had the odds stacked against them. We can only imagine the joy and pride she is feeling.

I think this must be how God is involved in our lives. Every day God takes a chance on us, knowing that we aren't perfect, that we will make mistakes, that we will experience difficulties and hardships. God makes an investment in us, hoping that we will acknowledge his presence in our lives and that we will strive to be worthy of the trust God has placed in us. And along the way God keeps loving us. God keeps picking us up and putting us back on the path that leads to life and salvation. When we fall short, God forgives us. When we feel undeserving, yet again God reminds us of his grace. And when we fulfill God's purpose for our lives God is right there celebrating with us and cheering us on.

And when opportunities come along for us to be generous to those in need, God is watching, and hoping that we will respond in a way that reflects God's benevolence in our own lives. We may not be able to have the kind of impact Mim Conway had on 27 students and their families; or maybe we will. But every act of generosity, no matter how small or how large, has a ripple effect. We may never know how many people are influenced by that one simple gesture done to the glory of God.

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray. Generous God, each and every day you lavish us with your grace and mercy. Your benevolence is unending. May we seek out opportunities to be generous to others, and in so doing reflect your love for the creation. Amen