

# People Are Born To Shine!

A newsletter rooted in the Christian faith created to inspire and support all people, irrespective of nationality, race, and religion.



## ACTS OF KINDNESS

# Share Your Soles

It was 1999 when Mona Prudy went to Guatemala to run a marathon. She was working as hairstylist, getting over a divorce, and raising three children under the age of five on her own.

At that time, Mona was spoiling her kids. She felt guilty because they did not have two parents like regular kids. Mona spent loads of money on meaningless things. She later described these objects as “unimportant” because they set such a bad example for her children.

While she was running the marathon, she met a group of children dipping their feet in sticky black goo made from soil. She later learned they do this because they have no shoes. This goo was supposed to protect their feet while walking on the hot roads. Later that day, Mona met an American orthopedic surgeon who was visiting the village. He told her if these children had shoes to wear, there would be less of a need for him to frequently travel to the region. His visits were to perform amputations of children’s infected limbs.



***When you choose to make a difference in an innocent child’s life, you bring love, hope and a sense of belonging into their life — as well as your own ~ Mona Prudy***

Flying back home, Mona was thinking over and over about this encounter. She thought about her own kids who had tons of shoes. Some they don’t even wear. Was she organizing her priorities right? She prayed and asked the Lord for enlightenment: “Tell me how I can help these kids!” Mona was determined to do something about it.

Up on her arrival home, Mona told this story to neighbors, friends, relatives, and neighboring schools as well as to her own kids. She collected lots of shoes — so many that her garage was overflowing!

During the Christmas season, Mona flew back to Guatemala. She donated the shoes to an orphanage near the city. When she arrived, the children gathered around her, all barefoot. The nun told Mona that this might be their only Christmas gift this year. Mona was very moved during her mission and felt the pride of accomplishment.

However, the story did not end. As she was leaving, the nun asked a question that changed the course of her life: “When are you coming back?”

Back in Chicago, Mona established the organization “Share Your Soles”. The

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### ***Your Memory - Use It or Lose It!***

*Have you ever forgotten an appointment, where you left your keys, or someone’s name?*

A TOUCH OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM MARTHA WILLIAMSON

# The Dark Night of the Soul



*What was the surprise at the end of the dark night of the soul?*

Someone shared with me a story of an Indian legend. I don't know if it is a true Native American legend but it is an interesting lesson about God's love for us. A father takes his son into the forest, blindfolds him and leaves him alone. He is required to sit on a rock for the whole night and not remove the blindfold until the rays of the morning sun shines through it. He cannot cry out for help to anyone. Once he survives the night, he is a man. He cannot tell the other boys of this experience because each one must come into manhood on his own. The boy is naturally terrified. He can hear all kinds of noises. Wild beasts must surely be all around him. Maybe even some humans might try to do him harm. The wind blows and the earth shakes the rock but he sits stoically never removing the blindfolds. It would be the only way he could become a man. Finally after a horrific night the sun appears and he removes his blindfold and it is

then that he discovers his father sitting on the rock next to him. He had been at watch the entire night, protecting his son from harm.

Well obviously the father in the story is intended to represent God and his faithful care and ever present love for his children. And I imagine, the young man represents each one of us. The child who God watches over and protects as we walk through this life, hoping to survive the terrors of the night, challenged to outlast the darkness and wait patiently for the sunrise. When the sun arrives, we discover we haven't been alone at all but God had been watching our back all along.

It is a well-intentioned story but not a perfect analogy. I don't see God's children walking blindly through life

only to pull the blindfold off at the end and be surprised that God was always with them, guarding and protecting. I think the reason the children of God get through the darkness and come into the light is because they have known all along God was with them. Knowing that God exists and that He loves me and walks with me through life's hardest trials is what gets me through the dark night. Knowing when I step into the light he will still be there is what gives me hope. Knowing I don't have to pass a test to become all I can



become, that Jesus already took that test for me and passed it for me, is what gives me courage to carry on.

Perhaps the story is meant to teach us that in those times when things get so tough and imagining God during those situations seems almost impossible, it doesn't mean he is not there. Whatever the intentions of this legend, there is one certain truth to be found; even in the darkest midnight of your soul when you can't see God, never forget, He can see you!

Source: Martha Williamson,  
[atouchofencouragement.com](http://atouchofencouragement.com)

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

# Your Memory: Use It or Lose It!

Have you ever forgotten an appointment, where you left your keys, or someone's name? Thanks to modern technology, we have computers, phones, and countless other devices to keep us on track. While we rely heavily on these tools, do we stop to consider how they affect our memory? How can our memory remain strong if we stop using it? Fortunately, studies support there are simple strategies everyone can practice to maintain and potentially improve our memory.

## PAY ATTENTION

Studies show we lose our capacity to remember as we age. Through actively listening, responding and acknowledging, remembering becomes easier.

## WRITE DOWN ALL APPOINTMENTS

Carry a memo pad and pen along with you wherever you go. Make note of all engagements and appointments you schedule and accept. Keep a notepad next to each phone in your home and on your bedside table. Writing things down will help you to remember.

## USE ASSOCIATION TO REGISTER NAMES OF PEOPLE YOU MEET

When you are introduced to someone new, think of a clever way to associate his or her name. Does it rhyme with a simple word? Does he/she remind you of someone you already know? Or perhaps they resemble a famous actor? Commit their name to memory for future recollection.

## APPLY STICKY NOTES TO DOORS, MIRRORS AND CABINETS

These can be great reminders, but keep them to a minimum. Take down ones you no longer need. When you are leaving for the day, bring along the sticky notes that have people's names or appointment times and places. Keep them handy to remind yourself where you are going, when you need to be there, and whom you will see.

## USE PILLBOXES

Keep the pillbox stocked for the entire day including morning, noon, mid-afternoon and nighttime doses of all



necessary medications. Set aside time to refill it once per week. This is also an excellent way to stay on top of the need to refill prescriptions before they run out.

## USE ALARMS AND TIMERS

This is an easy way to remind yourself of when to take medications, when you need to leave for an appointment or eat lunch.

## PLAY MIND GAMES

Whether it's a word search, daily crossword puzzle or computer game, everyone needs to work with the brain to keep it awake!

## FOCUS ON FOLATE

A recent study published in *The Lancet* found Folate can slow cognitive decline and can improve the memory. Foods rich in Folate are strawberries, orange juice, green leafy vegetables, dried beans, fortified cereal, nonfat milk and yogurt, seafood poultry and whole grains. Your smart food strategy should include 5 to 9 daily servings of colorful foods such as dark colored fresh fruits and vegetables. Your brain consumes 30% of your daily calories. The right foods will provide the fuel required to help your brain think, concentrate, remember and react. Even while you sleep, your brain is consuming fuel. That is why eating a good breakfast is important. It refuels your body and your brain.

Sources: Scarmeas, Stern, Tang, Mayeux and Luchsinger  
Mediterranean diet and risk for Alzheimer's disease.  
*Annals of Neurology*. Yourmemorymatters.com



*Although God knows our every need,  
His work He wants to share;  
He takes us into partnership  
By calling us to prayer.*

— D. De Haan

## CHECKING IN WITH THE BIBLE

# Our Daily Bread: He Already Knows

### READ: Matthew 6:5-8

*Do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. —Matthew 6:8*

A friend who is a commercial pilot told me about a flight in which he encountered a serious mechanical issue — a problem with dangerous implications. When the situation occurred, the warning lights in the cockpit informed him of the problem and he monitored it all the way to the destination, ultimately landing safely.

Once on the ground, the pilot immediately went to the maintenance staff and reported it. To his surprise, the mechanics responded, “We already know about the problem and are ready to fix it. When you got the cockpit warning, we automatically got an electronic warning as well.”

As he shared that incident, I couldn’t help but compare it to Jesus’ words about our heavenly Father: “Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him” (Matt. 6:8). He said this in contrast to people who believe that they must “use vain repetitions . . . For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (v.7). Jesus presupposes God’s knowledge of and concern for His children.

Even though God knows our needs, He still wants us to share our hearts with Him. He stands ready to hear our prayer and to repair our brokenness by His grace.

Prayer is the voice of faith, trusting that God knows and cares.

Source: Bill Crowder, *Our Daily Bread*, [obd.org](http://obd.org)

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only objective is to provide gently worn shoes to those in greatest need around the world! Church groups, scout troops, civic organizations, many people donated everything from slippers, to sandals and running shoes. The organization was offered warehouse space from a local real-estate business, CenterPoint Properties. Shoes were washed and bleached. Dress shoes were polished by volunteers from more than 30 states who are organizing additional shoe gathering events.

“Share Your Soles” grew so much that American Airlines offered to fly them to distribution sites around the world for free! The organization was able to send

13,000 pairs of shoes to New Orleans Katrina victims and 15,000 to Sri Lankan victims in Thailand. In the past 11 years, over a million pair of shoes have been delivered to Central America, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, Appalachia, Africa, Eastern Europe, American Indian Reservations and India.

“No boundaries. No borders. Share Your Soles is not a political organization. We have no religious affiliation. We do not claim to know the causes of poverty throughout the world. We only know it exists, and we do what we can to help.”

“I love delivering shoes, and sometimes I bring my kids along. It’s my new way of spoiling them—by showing them how blessed we really are to be

able to help others. They just love it and it beats anything I could buy them!

Please visit [shareyoursoles.org](http://shareyoursoles.org). Consider volunteering or contributing. “One dollar buys enough detergent to wash one load (30 pairs of shoes). Ten dollars pays for the packaging of 50 pairs of shoes. Make it a family, school or church project. And remember, it’s not only about the shoes. The shoes we take for granted can have a profound impact on a child’s life: they can be a form of transportation, a means for education (some kids aren’t accepted to school without shoes) and a source of self-esteem. A pair of shoes can mean all that. They can change a life.”

Source: [shareyoursoles.org](http://shareyoursoles.org)

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH

# Humor Can Heal!

*G. K. Chesterton once wrote, "Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly." And Proverbs 17:22 says, "A happy heart is good medicine."*

Here are a few ways humor can help!

## HUMOR COMBATS FEAR

Humor can disable fear because it changes your perspective of the past and the present. A traumatic episode from childhood can be eased in your heart if you place it into the "ridiculous" category along with other stories from the past. Choose to follow the advice of Leo Buscaglia: "When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on. And swing!"

## HUMOR COMFORTS

Charlie Chaplin once said, "To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain and play with it." Perhaps that is how great comics like Stephen Colbert, Robin Williams, Ben Stiller, and Art Buchwald have journeyed and emerged through periods of torment.

New York City's Big Apple Circus has used humor to console sick children since 1986 when they started sending teams of clowns into hospital rooms with "rubber chicken soup" and other fun surprises. "It's for the children, yes..." explains Jane Englehardt, deputy director of the circus, "but it's also for the parents who, when they hear their children laugh for the first time in days or weeks, know everything's going to be O.K."

## HUMOR REDUCES PAIN

The psychiatric nurses at Laurel Regional Hospital gather patients around the TV to watch funny flicks or videos. Dr. Elias Shaya, Chief of Psychiatry at Good Samaritan Hospital in Baltimore instills the importance of laughter in his patients. Says Dr. Shaya: "I advocate finding ways to laugh by watching comedy or engaging in looking up jokes and sharing them." Some hospitals have created "Humor Rooms" to encourage patients to incorporate humor into



their recovery process. Science backs these efforts.

## HUMOR BOOSTS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM AND REDUCES STRESS

In 2006, researchers led by Lee Berk and Stanley A. Tan of Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California discovered that hormones and beta-endorphins (which alleviate depression) and human growth hormone (HGH, which helps with immunity) increased by 27 and 87 percent respectively when volunteers anticipated watching a humorous video. Even the simple anticipation of laughter boosted these health-protecting hormones and chemicals.

## HUMOR SPREADS HAPPINESS

Laughter is contagious. Perhaps that's why 5,000 Laughter Clubs have emerged around the world. People get together and simply laugh for no reason at all. According to Dr. Shaya of Good Samaritan Hospital, "These clubs have exercises that teach how to move your face, how to laugh more intensely to involve the shoulders, then the belly."

## HUMOR CULTIVATES OPTIMISM

Humor is like gratitude in that it nurtures optimism. If humor can transform a painful memory of the past or a gnawing issue of the present into an opportunity to laugh at the craziness of life, perhaps a person can better facilitate his own healing.

Source: Therese J. Borchard, beliefnet.com

## Share your story with us!

Do you have a story that lifts spirits, motivates and inspires people to hold on to their dreams, to change their lives and surpass obstacles? Share your story with us today!  
Your story can help others!

[NCF@najicherfanfoundation.org](mailto:NCF@najicherfanfoundation.org)

## Quoteable!

If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.

- Mother Teresa

## GO GREEN

# Planting Trees to Save the Planet



Each day we read articles and hear news reports about global warming and how the Earth is changing. We are told something needs to be done on a global scale. Until worldwide governments unite in action, we can do our share as individuals and contribute to the efforts to save our planet.

Planting a tree is one simple task every adult and child can accomplish to help our suffering planet. Here is how one tree can make a difference!

Trees generate a wealth of oxygen and release it into the atmosphere. To better grasp the large quantity of oxygen a tree generates, consider this basic conversion of oxygen to currency. In a lifetime, one tree generates \$31,250 US dollars worth of oxygen. While that seems like a tremendous number, it is far from the sole contribution of a tree.

Trees clean the air we breathe by absorbing air pollution. It is amazing to think that in a lifetime, a single tree provides \$62,000 worth of air pollution control.

*“Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”*

— Warren Buffett

Trees recycle water. They absorb water and use it again and again. Using the dollar value comparison, one tree recycles \$37,500 worth of water in its lifetime.

Soil is part of a similar process. A tree’s roots hold the earth together and prevent soil erosion. The dollar conversion value of this is staggering. In a lifetime, one tree controls \$31,250 of soil erosion.

The bottom line calculation demonstrates one tree contributes \$162,000 in positive, measurable actions for our planet. This large sum does not entirely reflect the contribution of one tree.

Each tree provides shade. They protect and house countless animals that impact Mother Nature’s grand plans. And perhaps most importantly, the beauty and majesty of the tree is immeasurable.

The pure beauty of the tree, in addition to this list of contributions, make it a priceless object available for everyone to enjoy!

What are we waiting for? Based on these monetary values, if everyone planted a single tree today, it would convert into billions of dollars toward saving our environment and our planet.

Planting a tree is simple and the

cost is minimal. It takes just 10 minutes to plant yet reaps a lifetime of rewards.

There are other alternatives for those who would rather not get dirt under their fingernails. There are online services that offer tree planting in return for monetary donations. Another solution, which is completely free, is using online search engines that use advertising revenue to plant trees. A great example is MyGoodPage.com.

Source: Tomer Treves, [articlesbase.com](http://articlesbase.com)

## PRAYER CORNER

*Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this:  
He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.  
Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.  
For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land.*

Extract from Psalm 37 by David.  
Suggested by NCF member Jad Daher

## HOW I REMEMBER NAJI...

# He Saw Laughter in Everything

Naji had become one of my very best friends from day one. Our journey together began in Athens; I had just moved to Greece from New York and began the eighth grade with Naji. We had very similar personalities and soon our alliance grew into a very deep friendship. At the end of that year, we went to the prom together and shared our very first dance.

After 3 years in Greece I moved back to the US. The first year back, I couldn't bear being without Greece and became depressed, and my parents scrambled every penny they had to send me back for the summer. On the way to the airport, my wallet was stolen with all of my money. So, I hopped on the plane, without a single dollar! When I arrived, Naji immediately got into contact with me and he found out from mutual friends that I was without money, he met me right away and handed me \$100.

On that day, I had friends that were leaving for the island of Ios and now, because I had some money, I was able to go with them. So, I was off... I had a great time and as it turns out found love on that trip. I met my soon to be boyfriend Randy, who was on vacation from New York!

Flash forward years later. I moved to Miami with Randy and we were both attending college. Naji had just woken from his coma and he would call us every day. He had no short-term memory at the time and he would often call us 5 times a day and fill us in on the fact that he had gotten into a motorcycle accident that nearly took his life and left him in a coma for 2 ½ months. At that time, Naji's parents had been all over the world with him for therapy. They heard that Randy was a massage therapist, a trainer and a healer. So one thing led to another and Naji moved to Miami with us and the process of healing began. We became his caretakers and his mentors at the time.

The best gift that Naji had, despite his pain and his handicap, was his ability to laugh at himself. He saw the humor in everything. Even at the way his hand looked due to the accident. We would all laugh and call him the claw. He loved it! Laughter healed us all! It's amazing how things come full circle. Naji's \$100 allowed me to find love in Randy and Randy was the person who took care of Naji years later. Naji's selfless generosity opened up a world of adventure, nurturing, humor, determination and love...

In Miami, Naji found God, had a great girlfriend, began to drive, took classes in Tai Chi, swam, and found a great circle of friends. He was ready to live an independent productive



life. It was time to move on and so he moved back to Greece. Throughout the years, each time I meet him, Naji was unrecognizable to me, same Naji, but more powerful and wiser!

Last time I saw Naji was in Greece in the summer. I only had one night in Athens and first thing we did is go to his dance studio. Naji wanted to show off his new acquired dance skills. He had been taking ballroom dancing. He looked so graceful, so suave. I was so proud. My mind raced back to the eighth-grade prom. We then went to have dinner at his parents' house. We had such a good time and talked all through the night about spirituality, passion, love, about friendships and dreaming big. It was such a great night. It was perfect.

Naji drove me back home and insisted to accompany me to the door in spite of the fact that he was

extremely tired. He said, "My father taught me to always be a gentleman." That was so typical of Naji!

Naji passed away the following day in his sleep. It felt surreal to me. I was the last person to see him. His mother, Sana, later said that I was there for his first dance, at the prom, and for his last dance. I am so thankful that I saw Naji so happy and that he was in such a good place before his passing. Naji lived his life to the fullest! Another gift that Naji possessed was he was always present. He was always 100 percent in the moment and being around that is contagious. We were all so present to the prior evening that nothing else mattered. I know that Naji is in a better place. In my whole life I have never met someone so eager to help anyone, not just loved ones. He was so generous, so loving. At the same time, a spit fire, a jokester, a rebel in his own right! I truly believe that there is a reason that Naji passed like this and that Naji's time was complete here. It's time to go inspire and teach somewhere else. He was a true teacher. Every time I think of Naji, I laugh. Laughter is how I truly remember Naji. The ability to laugh at one self is where true growth lies. I saw this through him.

*Naji mou...*

*Thank you for all the memories... I love you always...*

*You still make me laugh...*

*The spirit lives on in laughter...*

*You made this clear to me... You are still teaching me!*

*Thank you my brother...*

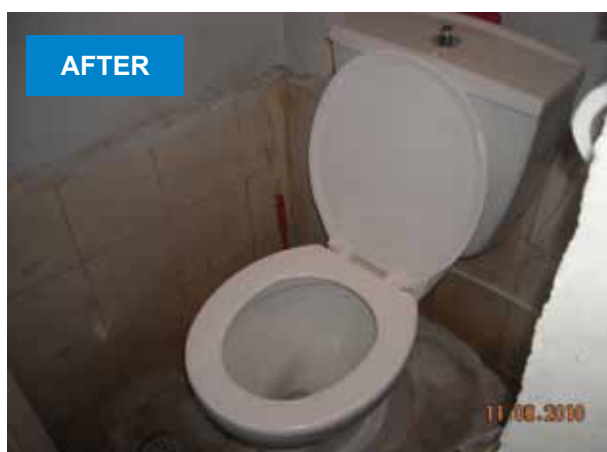
—Olga Christodoulou

## NCF NEWS UPDATE

# Giving HOPE to Needy Families to Glorify Jesus



BEFORE



AFTER

These photos show the bathroom used by a 70 year old woman before and after NCF replaced the toilet.

*Mathew 25: ‘...Because whatever you did for one of my brothers or sisters, no matter how unimportant, you did for me.’*

“I never would have imagined that a small inexpensive electric heater could generate such happiness within a family,” said Marleine Nasrany, NCF volunteer. Marleine went to deliver a donation to a woman and her brother, both paraplegic and supported by their aging 90 year old mother. “It is a blessing to be part of a project that I participate in solely to glorify the name of the Lord,” she says. Indeed, we can do so much with so little. This is the main objective of the HOPE project. We help needy families with non-financial donations, based on small amounts of money allocated to a different family each month.

Following this same ideology, NCF is teaming up with church-based organizations to locate needy families. There are many families in desperate need of clothes, medication, and support for their children’s school fees. For some families, even basic needs have become urgent. The need for a clean safe bathroom, a warm bed, or simple shelter is immediate.

NCF volunteers perform a needs assessment and identify urgent needs throughout several visits. This newly launched project has successfully helped 20 families and an orphanage of 30 children by providing generous donations of electric heaters, toilet replacement, refrigerators, ovens as well as scholarship aids.

## People Are Born To Shine!

*People are Born To Shine* is a bi-monthly, electronic newsletter owned by The Naji Cherfan Foundation focusing on spirituality and health. The objective of *People are Born to Shine* is to raise awareness among our readers on health challenges and disease prevention, while inspiring them to live a fuller, more abundant life guided by Christian values. This newsletter is dedicated to those affected by brain injuries.

The content has been carefully selected from sources considered reliable and accurate, however The Naji Cherfan Foundation assumes no responsibility for inaccurate information.

For subscriptions, comments, contributions and suggestions please contact us: [info@najicherfanfoundation.org](mailto:info@najicherfanfoundation.org)

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