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**AMAZING**  
**GIFT OF A DAY**  
**STORIES!**

# CROSSROADS' SUPERHEROES

**2019**

**12¢**

# THE GREATEST GIFT OF ALL.

WINIFRED "JO" CARROLL  
CINCINNATI, OH



What's the greatest gift you've ever received? A puppy? Maybe a diamond ring or fancy watch? Is it a new coat, designer jeans or an exotic trip?

For Winifred "Jo" Carroll, it was something entirely different. She didn't covet shiny new objects. When you grow up homeless, things like jewelry and jeans are trumped by food and shelter. And even though those hungry days are far behind Jo, she can never, ever forget.

Now, because of her childhood – or in spite of her childhood – Jo chooses to give rather than receive.

For years, Jo worked with her church to help organize weekly dinners for the low-income people in the community. Every Wednesday, dozens came to eat a nutritious meal and Jo was always there to serve. It gave her tremendous joy to be able to help those who walked in the same shoes as she did years ago.

So when Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care asked Jo what she wanted for her special gift, naturally, it was not a lavish dress or vacation.

Instead, Jo gave her gift away to all those in her Cincinnati community. Nearly 100 people filled her church hall, savoring cheesy lasagna, crisp salad, garlic rolls and – most of all – Jo's kindness and generosity.

Family, friends and recurring diners toasted Jo, followed by her daughter who raised her glass and tried to speak, choking back a flood of tears as she looked at all the lives Jo had touched.

At the sound of live jazz music, tears gave way to smiles and Jo led the group in a New Orleans line dance! Crossroads passed out brightly colored umbrellas that the guests held high as they danced, shimmied and marched single-file behind Jo in her wheelchair.

Belly laughs, boisterous dancing, strangers hugging strangers – it was an evening to remember. And, by all accounts, the greatest gift of all.

DINNER'S  
READY!



# Parisian Native Transported Back Home.



YVETTE DI GANGI  
CLEVELAND, OH

Close your eyes. Imagine sitting at an outdoor café, sipping champagne on Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré as the intoxicating aroma of baking bread wafts around you. Across the street, towers the 12th-Century Notre Dame Cathedral, while boutiques filled with sophisticated fashions and artwork await your treasure-hunt.

This dreamy setting was home to Yvette Di Gangi, Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care patient. Yvette grew up 20 miles south of Paris in a small village called Macherey. She met her husband at a local bakery, courted and moved to America after their first son was born in 1950. And, although she was enamored by the bright lights and excitement of a bustling young nation, Yvette always longed for Paris. At age 94, she finally made it back.

Crossroads transformed Yvette's room into an elegant Parisian café. The guest of honor savored creamy brie and flaky croissants, homemade Madeline cookies (Yvette's favorite!), and rich chocolates in the shape of the Eiffel Tower. Classical French music filled her ears; friends and family – including her beloved daughter, Mary Frances – filled her heart.

Life imitating art, the group colored and painted French scenes as Mary Frances recounted Yvette's biggest moments – meeting her husband, raising four children, working as a celebrated hair dresser, writing poetry, marrying her second husband and perfecting French cooking on American soil.

"Everything is so beautiful," Yvette repeated in her thick, elegant accent, "Merci!"

Thanks to a caring Crossroads team, Yvette was transported back to that magical place along the River Seine, where croissants and chocolates heal aches and pains, and memories satisfy the yearn for home.

"De Rien," Yvette. You're welcome.



Merci!



# PUPPY KISSES, SELFLESS WISHES.

CATHY MADSEN  
KANSAS CITY, MO

The most natural response to being given a gift is to receive it, with thanks. But for Cathy Madsen, who has devoted most of her life to giving, receiving a gift proved very difficult to do.

When Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care presented Cathy with a rare chance to choose any gift she wanted as part of its Gift of a Day program, she instead found a way to redirect it to others. Because... well, that's Cathy.

A passionate animal lover and fierce advocate, Cathy's perfect gift was to host a fundraiser that would benefit Friends of the Animal Shelter – a nonprofit organization Cathy founded in 2000. After a weeks-long effort by Crossroads, St. Joe's Animal Shelter and the local community, Cathy got her gift: The "Shake, Wag and Roll" Fundraiser.

Nearly 300 attendees gathered at Ol' MacDonald's Farm in St. Joseph's, MO to

support the animals. More than 50 local businesses and service providers set up booths to showcase their best and generously donated items for raffle. Good eats delighted both people and pets, plus country music artist Casey Brett kept everyone "pawfectly" entertained.

Best of all, the event raised over \$7,000! Cathy was overwhelmed by the generosity of her community. Her giving nature, once more, brought her total joy and fulfillment. "I'm in awe," said Cathy's husband, Kenneth. "And, I'm grateful that Cathy was finally recognized for all of the selfless work she has done over the years. It makes me immensely proud."

Truth be told? The event wasn't completely altruistic. Cathy made a brief stop at the kissing booth where she received her favorite gift of all – a sweet, sloppy puppy kiss on the cheek. Good dog.



# WOOF!



# A WILD BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION.



*Reader's Digest* ranks "going to the zoo" as one of the top 15 things you should never outgrow.

Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care patient Jo White agrees. She wanted nothing more than to celebrate her 84th year on this earth at the Oklahoma City Zoo, one of the few she has never visited. Thanks to Crossroads, her birthday wish was granted.

It was a wild time (pun intended).

Jo, who has lived all over the U.S. – from Kansas to Arizona to Oklahoma – visited more than 20 zoos, including the oldest (Philadelphia) and the largest (San Diego). But, she had never stepped foot in Oklahoma City's zoo – home to nearly 2,000 animals.

The day started with lunch at a zoo cafe. Jo, her daughter and her son, along with friends from Crossroads ate animal-inspired indulgences like snake bites and frozen lemonades in gorilla cups. Feeling satiated but untamed, Jo set off to explore.

First stop: the giraffes, Jo's favorite. Jo even had the rare chance to pet the placid, long-necked creatures. The group then moved on to see trumpeting elephants, tigers, hippos. A stroll by the bears and big cats brought Jo face-to-face with a lion, lounging. She reached a hand to the thick glass separating them, when – suddenly – he gave it a big lick through the glass!

They giggled at otters, marveled at gorillas, and pretended not to look at menacing alligators. Jo and her 60-year-ish children felt the unabashed joy of preschoolers. It was pure fun.

Best of all, the animals cooperated. Could they have sensed it was a special day? Did they perceive how much their spectacle meant to Jo? How important it was for her to feel young again? The joy of it all?

Or maybe they simply trusted their instincts.



# Strutting Her Stuff.

ANNA KISSELL  
PHILADELPHIA, PA

# EAGLES!

Anna Kissell is a South Philadelphia native to the core. An Italian with strong views on who makes the best cheese steak, she is convinced she bleeds Eagles green, knows every line in Rocky I, II, and III, and – most importantly – has never missed a New Year's Day Mummers' Parade.

Before she could talk, Anna and her big, close-knit family braved the single-digit temperatures, snow and wind to catch a glimpse of the wildly feathered string bands strutting up Broad Street. It was a tradition, an anchoring memory of fun, family and Philly.

When Anna's health forced her to miss the annual parade for the first time, it hurt.

Anna's signature spunk – her own personal strut – started to disappear until Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care decided to bring the Mummers to her as an early birthday gift. Surprise! One afternoon, four members of the Fercko String Band, a Mummers legend, paraded into her facility along with many of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

The Fercko Band placed a feather boa around Anna's neck and then performed, playing all of her

favorites including "Golden Slipper." Bob, Anna's son, said "My mom came to life at that song. She was happy, and that was all I wanted."

Well...that and a Philadelphia Eagles Super Bowl win, of course. And so the serenade ended with the signature E-A-G-L-E-S chant for good luck. After the band left, the family celebrated Anna's birthday with a Mummers-inspired cake, topped with candles that danced wildly from the current of energy in the room. Anna's eyes twinkled in the glow. She closed them, made her wish and exhaled.

Wish granted (both of them).



# WALTZING THROUGH LIFE.



TOMMIE JOHNSON  
ATLANTA, GA

When Tommie Johnson was in her early 20s, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire first graced the screen with their famously choreographed dancing. Instantly she fell in love with their synchronized swaying and determined to learn the moves herself.

She did – and then some.

With a passion for music, Tommie took to dancing naturally. She learned the many styles of ballroom dancing like the waltz, tango, foxtrot...samba, merengue, cha-cha...jive, swing, and even mambo #5! Tommie married and raised two daughters, keeping the girls delightfully entertained as she sang and danced while she cooked, cleaned and toiled through each day.

Now, nearly a century old, Tommie wanted to feel the music one more time. So, Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care signaled the music! Over 25 family members and friends also put on their dancing shoes to celebrate Tommie with a private, in-home concert.

A professional singer and guitarist crooned for more than an hour – playing all of Tommie’s favorite songs from Motown greats like Anita Baker, Marvin Gaye and Luther Vandross. Tommie tapped her toes and swayed in her wheelchair, and suddenly she was up as her ballroom dance instructor carefully pulled Tommie to her feet. They waltzed around the room just as she had done through life.

She was floating, a butterfly, graceful and effortless.

The whites of Tommie’s eyes grew watery as she stepped right, back, left, forward, her feet moving in lockstep with her memories. She whispered the words of the capstone song – a beloved gospel tune called “Through It All” that brought Tommie comfort throughout her life – as it serenaded her soul.

Tommie’s dance card was full – as was her heart.



# THROUGH IT ALL



# A CELEBRATION OF LOVE 70 YEARS IN THE MAKING.



The price of a swanky wedding with 200 guests in May 1948 was about \$2,000. Back then, brides were often given an ice bath beforehand to ensure a “calm demeanor.”

Exactly 70 years since Anna Blackie said “I do,” she had no need for an ice bath! Anna was cool as a cucumber when she renewed her vows to husband Walter. And, thanks to Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care, the price was \$0!

Yet, Crossroads spared nothing treating their patient and her husband to a beautiful wedding vow renewal ceremony. First, they whisked the couple away on a tour down

memory lane where they visited past homes, sneaking as many photos as they did kisses.

Next, they rolled out the white carpet for a makeshift church ceremony, transforming Walter’s nursing home with decorations, photos from their wedding, and even Anna’s wedding dress on display. Nearly 40 of the Blackie’s closest friends and family members came to celebrate, including the initial best man.

Sparkling in a tiara, Anna was all dolled up in a dress and lipstick and Walter wore the very same tie he did at their wedding! Their son walked Anna down the aisle to “Unchained

Melody.” She was so overjoyed to see everyone that she stopped to greet every single guest. It took so long they had to play the song twice!

Walter finally cajoled his bride to the altar and then cupped her hand delicately in his – so perfectly familiar. They said their vows, even reciting a poem read at their original ceremony. Before the kiss, the two looked into each other’s eyes with pure love that anyone could see was as strong and true as it was the day they got married seven decades before.

There wasn’t a dry eye in the house. Thank you for being a real-life inspiration.





# Blues Musician Returns to His Roots.

The Chicago blues scene of the early 1950s rocked with some of the greatest of all time at every smoke-filled club in town. Soulful and swanky, Chicago attracted young musicians from all over like Jessie Sanders of Mississippi. Barely 15 years old, Jessie left home with just a few dollars and a dream.

Jessie was good, really good. It didn't take long to attract the notice of fellow Mississippian, Howlin' Wolf (birth name, Chester Burnett). With a booming voice, Howlin' Wolf would become one of the best-known Chicago blues artists and is now ranked #54 in *Rolling Stones'* list of best musicians of all time.

Jessie performed with Howlin' Wolf for about 25 years. As a tribute to his mentor, Jessie took the name "Lil' Howlin Wolf," after he passed, and toured for 50 more years across the U.S and Europe. He played with blues legends like James Brown, Jimmy Reed, Hound Dog Taylor, Aretha Franklin and BB King.

Flattened notes that loop to create that bluesy sound coursed through Jessie's veins, filled his soul.

One day, the music stopped. Then, Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care turned it back on for the 87-year-old Lil' Howlin Wolf! The team wheeled Jessie down Memphis' famous Beale Street where the music of promising blues singers filled his ears and a big broad smile returned to his face.

JESSIE SANDERS  
MEMPHIS, TN

At Silky O'Sullivan's, a popular club owned by Jessie's best friend, the group – which included his wife and children – ate BBQ and was serenaded by a local blues band. But, this was no regular patron! This was Lil' Howlin Wolf and everyone treated him like the blues legend he was, announcing his name, standing up for him in honor, and playing songs from his heyday as a tribute.

For two hours, Jessie tapped his feet and held on to that mile-wide grin – held on to his roots.

Lil' Howlin'  
Wolf



# BENGALS SUPER FAN FINALLY GETS A WIN.



CARLOS HENDERSON  
CINCINNATI, OH

Even after the Cincinnati Bengals went 15 years without a winning season, super fan Carlos "Monty" Henderson held on to hope. He watched every game – each player, a personal hero. He saw them play in person at Paul Brown Stadium a few times until Monty was sidelined with nasopharyngeal cancer.

From that point on, he only watched the Orange & Black on TV but remained ever-devoted.

Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care, determined to brighten Monty's worsening days, had an idea: what if we could bring the Bengals to Monty? Give him a chance to meet his heroes in person? It was a crazy idea, and like the Bengals' chance of winning the next Super Bowl, a long shot.

Touchdown! It was a warm summer day when two Bengals players, one retired and one current, paid Monty a visit. Three-time Pro-Bowler David Fulcher and current running back and special teams player Cedric Peerman stood towering just outside his front door as Monty blinked back – incredulous.

It didn't seem real...two Bengals players now sitting inside his home. The shock melted into joy as Monty squealed like a toddler who discovers a puppy in his Christmas stocking. The players autographed a football, t-shirt and other Bengals gifts for Monty and answered his flurry of questions.

Fulcher, now the football coach for Cincinnati Christian University, asked about Monty's illness. The players became quiet and listened sympathetically – realizing that Monty's struggle was tougher than any football game they'd played – and then promised to pray for him.

Light danced in Monty's eyes – maybe for the last time – and his mother stood nearby watching as tears quietly tumbled down her cheeks. This gift was a win, much-deserved and overdue.



## TOUCHDOWN!



# CROSSROADS GOES WHERE NO ONE HAS GONE BEFORE.

JONATHAN FALITICO  
NORTHEAST, OH

Nearly 40 years after the first movie was released, Star Wars remains a cultural phenomenon. The trilogy has attracted more fervent fans than any other movie series in history, with one-third of all Americans owning at least one Star Wars product!

Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care patient Jonathan Falitico is no exception. He was introduced to Luke, Leia, Yoda, R2-D2 and the rest of the gang at age two when he first saw Star Wars on the big screen. He fell deeply in love. So when the 'empire struck back,' well – Jonathan was hooked.

Over the years, Jonathan collected many Star Wars paraphernalia – from his first two Imperial shuttles (one is still in its original box) to dozens of character

t-shirts, stuffed animals, costumes and figurines. Jonathan and his wife even mounted crisscrossing lightsabers on the wall over their bed!

Maybe guided by 'the Force,' Crossroads sensed that the best gift for Jonathan would be a screening of the only Star Wars movie that he had never seen – Star Wars: The Last Jedi.

"Amazing, it was," as Yoda would say.

Jonathan and his wife arrived at Kent Theatre in a stretch limo and stepped out on to a long, red carpet. To Jonathan's surprise, he was greeted by an imposing 7'2" Darth Vader, as well as Imperial Officers and Jedi Knights all in full costume.

Next, the couple and their friends enjoyed a private screening of the film.

After the show, the group had dinner together and dutifully debated every scene – "should Luke have helped Rey learn the ways of the Force?" "Will the Jedi order embrace the dark side?" These superfans were engrossed in Star Wars conversation, and enthralled in a fantastical, alter-universe. Crossroads had transported Jonathan to a place no man has gone before. And it was great.





# Caregiver is Taken Care of at Last.



ARETHA SYKES  
ST. LOUIS, MO

"Mom, it's time to wake up," said Aretha Sykes' daughter, gently.

The afternoon had been so luxuriously relaxing that the woman who spent her entire life caring for others, had drifted into a peaceful slumber while enjoying a massage. It was heaven, an indulgence she hadn't experienced in years.

Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care saw the chance to return just a small fraction of the many years of caregiving back to their selfless patient...and took it!

Aretha married and raised seven children over two decades. While tending to her babies, Aretha also mustered the energy to care for strangers as a hospital aide. Now, after seeing two of her children and husband pass away and suffering from dementia herself, Aretha was finally worn out.

Relaxation – it's what the doctor ordered. Crossroads filled the script, and arranged for Aretha's daughter and two granddaughters to join her for a soothing spa day. It was reminiscent of the 'girls only' outings Aretha had arranged for her daughters on special occasions growing up.

To Aretha, the spa was more about love than luxury – always caring for others. Now, it was her turn.

The pampering started with a warm foot soak and rub, followed by a facial – complete with a rich, hydrating mask and head massage. Finally, she enjoyed a mani-pedi – choosing a lovely shade of pink for fingers and toes. It matched the color of the strawberry ice cream that ended the day.

The cherry on top, however, was hearing Aretha's small voice, which hadn't been used in months. "Thank you. This is so good," she said.

More importantly, Aretha, **you're** so good, so very good.



Ahhhh...



# HONORING A SURVIVAL STRATEGY, AND A SURVIVOR.

ROBERT BULPIN  
DAYTON, OH

107

The Great Depression forced people to take extreme measures to survive. For example, foraging for dandelion weeds to become a salad and eating sandwiches made of just salt and bread.

For Robert Bulpin, coffee was the key. He dipped stale bread into coffee, which softened the crusts and provided much-needed energy to his undernourished body. Robert was 18 years old at the start of the Great Depression in 1929 and still vividly recalls the hollow ache in his belly, the agonizing stretch of time between tasteless scraps.

Robert endured, and now food is his most valued treasure. He treats food with curious respect, ogling good sources of protein like they are the Mona Lisa. Even so, Robert remains steadfastly frugal, and only treats himself to a restaurant meal on the most special occasions.

Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care suggested that Robert's 107th birthday might be such an occasion. What was his heart's desire?

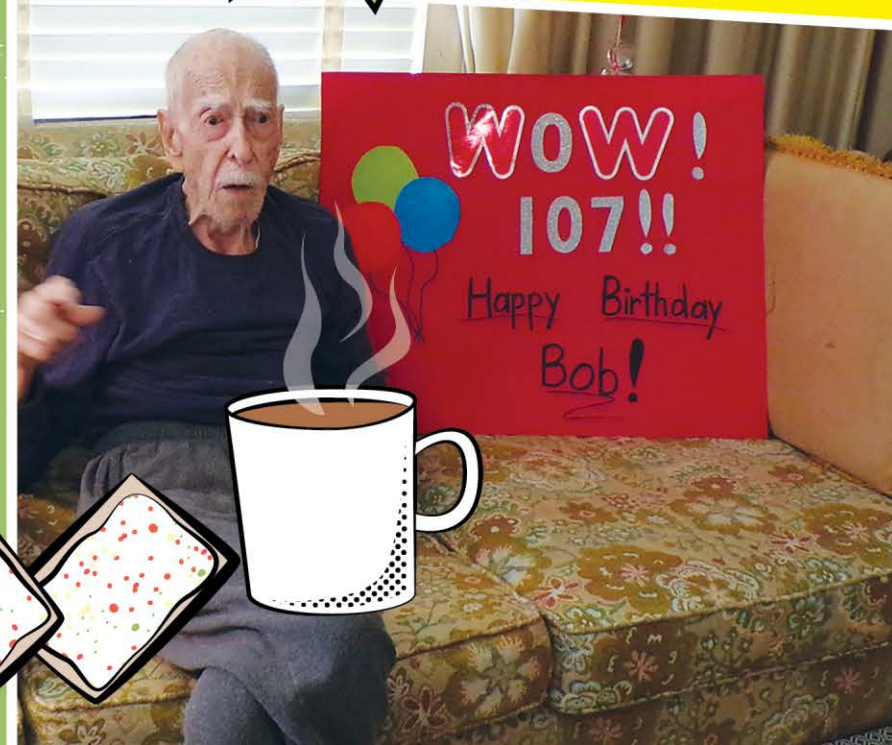
The Golden Corral, of course! So, Crossroads arranged an intimate birthday dinner catered by his favorite restaurant in his home. Robert relished every bite of fried shrimp, seafood salad and clam chowder, eating slowly and deliberately.

His dinner guests ate in awestruck silence, enrapt by Robert's real-life stories about life during the Depression. Robert and his mother fiercely scraped by, and it was clear by the shadows in his eyes and the hard lines on his face that Robert had seen it all.

He was, and remains, a survivor. Even now, with all of his family and most of his friends passed, Robert is resilient, cracking jokes witty as a teenager. So, as the group sang happy birthday, Robert grinned and dug in to his favorite dessert: Strawberry Pop-Tarts...dipped in coffee. Of course.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



# A Royal Storybook Ending.



MARGARET DAVIDSON  
LENEXA, KS

The allure of royalty! Real-life or storybook, princesses are like superheroes to girls of every age – four to 74. And what's not to like?! They are beautiful, adorn the most gorgeous dresses, are brimming with virtue and kindness – and always get the guy.

The first Disney princess, Snow White, melted the hearts of seven small woodsmen and one fair prince in 1937. Since then, 17 more rags-to-riches fairytales have regaled little girls everywhere – especially, Crossroads Hospice & Palliative Care Patient Margaret Davidson.

Cinderella, wearing her pale blue dress and riding stealthily to the ball in a pumpkin stagecoach, captured Margaret's heart years ago. She read the story of Cinderella and her evil stepsisters over and over again – never tiring of the tale, never outgrowing its destined romance.

Margaret grew up, but remained young at heart. Innocent, trusting, boundlessly loving – Margaret lived childlike though belied by her age in years. She still giggles, gives kisses, loves sweets. Even now, there was nothing that Margaret wanted more than to meet her favorite princess in person.

So, with the wave of a wand and a “bibbidi-bobbidi-boo,” Cinderella appeared! Margaret looked like she might faint, but then squealed with

delight. Her sisters, too, watched the magic unfold, a gift as meaningful to them as to Margaret.

Crossroads served a princess cake topped with pillows of white frosting and played Disney movies, but Margaret didn't notice. She held the white-gloved hand of her idol. She stared into her eyes, unblinking. As Cinderella said while dancing with Prince Charming, “It feels like a dream, better than a dream.”

Like Margaret, Cinderella saw the world not how it is, but how it could be. So when she hugged Cinderella goodbye, Margaret did not grow despondent. She just smiled wide, certain of a happy ending.

**bibbidi  
bobbidi  
boo!**





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