

## “Just a South African Girl Living in an Alabama World”

**“In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” – Acts 20:35**

While delivering gifts to various families this month, whose children were referred to Grace Klein Community for Christmas, I was reminded of a special time in my life when I was on the receiving end of the blessing.

I was 17 years old and in the 12th Grade. “In South Africa, the equivalent of the American prom is the Matric Dance, taking place during the matriculation (i.e., final) year of high school (12th grade). ... It usually takes the form of a formal dinner and dance.” – My friend, Wikipedia

Well, I didn’t have a dress for the Matric Dance. My mom was a single mom of two, working every day to make sure we had every basic necessity. She didn’t have extra for a dress. Without our prior knowledge, school teachers rallied together and gathered enough money for me to be able to rent a dress for the occasion. They presented my mom with the blessing. I’m sure my smile was priceless when I heard the news. The blessing went far beyond the money. Mom and I were able to spend quality mother and daughter time together while picking out the perfect dress. It was a beautiful periwinkle/lavender blue color. I remember feeling like a princess, treasured, loved and noticed.

Knowing what it is like to be on the receiving end makes what I do so much more rewarding.

One family drove in from Gulf Shores to deliver gifts for children they committed to sponsor. Another asked to personally meet their sponsor children in order to build further relationship beyond the gift giving. Others shipped gifts from Maryland, for the second year in a row, to care for a child.

Two young sisters desperately desired skates for Christmas this year. I believe their referral prayerfully shared their wish list, trusting that God would not only meet their physical needs, but the desires of their hearts as well. Both girls are rolling around the home since Christmas!



A young lady was referred with a need of a laptop for educational purposes. As you can imagine, laptops are quite “extreme” for a wish list, BUT GOD. That very day a lady posted on Acts 4:32 sharing how she wanted to bless a student with a laptop. I grabbed the laptop as soon as I could! What a great way to invest in the life of a child!

Many sponsors shared over and above the expected giving. Each choosing gifts for their sponsor child as if their own.

This year, Grace Klein Community friends loved on 303 children in Birmingham for Christmas, in addition to our 230 food delivery ministry families. Many of these families come from single parent homes. Others have children with severe special needs and all finances are focused towards medical treatment. How do we find these children? I’m glad you asked! Each child is referred by a community member or ministry/business partner of Grace Klein Community who have recognized a need in the lives of specific children with whom they foster relationships.

Below are testimonies from a few of our sponsors who graciously gave of their time and resources to love on these children for Christmas:

“Our family takes to heart the call of Christ to serve others. We have been blessed with the opportunity to directly serve those who are less fortunate and we love working with Grace Klein Community each year to a specific child. We look forward to more opportunities!” – Matt

“One of our family’s favorite parts of Christmas is adopting a Grace Klein Community child. I do not enjoy shopping, but when shopping for a greater purpose, I have such fun. Knowing our child has real needs makes it feel so ‘right.’ Giving truly becomes a joy! As if we are, in a small way, following Christ’s sacrificial example to us.” – Annette

“I am glad we could be a small part of making sure that every child has a present under the tree at Christmas. We don’t have kids, so it’s the one time of year that we get to shop for the little ones. Hopefully they enjoy their gifts as much as we enjoyed shopping for them! – Stacey

“I recently had the pleasure of participating in one of your outreach programs with a wonderful group of neighborhood women called the “Ballantrae Bunco Babes”. A young mother was in need of help in providing Christmas for her two young daughters. Our group adopted this family to try to bring some joy and love to these young ladies during this special time of year. It was truly a rewarding experience for me! I took my two young granddaughters (ages 7 and 10) with me on this shopping excursion. The girls embraced this opportunity to do something for others in a way that melted my heart and brought tears to my eyes! They were thoughtful and practical in their gift choices and engaged in excited and mature conversations about the importance of doing for others. This was a very special memory for the girls and I. We were able to share in the gift of giving to others, as well as create a tradition for us to share in the future! We feel truly blessed and beyond humbled to have been a part of this.” – Connie



Well, my three month project has come to an end. I am exhausted, but happy. Excited for 2018, but a bit homesick the last few days. God has allowed me to meet more amazing people and my heart has broken over many of the circumstances that find families in need. Our house has been full of people and our fridge somehow always stays full. Please “Come to the Table” and share a meal with us in 2018 so I can hear from your heart.

Merry Christmas dear friends and a Happy New Year.



**Will you get on your knees for me?**

Pray rest and peace and calm and serenity and all that “jazz” over me and my Birmingham family. We have been on a wild wooden rollercoaster ride, like the one at Alabama Splash Adventure, which pretty much sums up how life has been when it takes too many words to explain.

**Thank you for your love and support!**