

## *A Life of Inspiration*

She is too-soon gone, but the world and, certainly, Life Care Centers of America are better because of her. The life of Danette Henry – wife, mother, director of payroll for Life Care, and an inspirational model for all who knew her – will be celebrated today in a service at First Baptist Church of Cleveland, where she was a member.

Danette, 48, an associate of Life Care since 1983, died Monday morning in a Chattanooga hospital after a long battle with cancer. Her time on this earth has ended, but her influence lives on in the hearts of all who knew her. She was a woman of extreme dedication to her work, maximizing the gifts that God had given her. She displayed unrelenting courage as the disease attacked her body. Despite the ravages within, her strong flow of love to family and friends continued unimpeded. And through it all, she was anchored by a deep and abiding faith in her Lord, Jesus Christ.

Rarely has the death of anyone been as profoundly felt as has been the case with Danette's passing. During a kickoff meeting in the Southwest Division last week, I announced to the audience that she was in a Chattanooga hospital, fighting for her life. There was a collective gasp, and a hush fell across the room. It was a barometer of their strong feelings for her.

What was it about Danette that made her so beloved? Among the reasons are:

- *Her interest in, and concern for, others.* Jenni, Danette's older daughter, moved her wedding from a January 26 date in Nashville to the chapel of Memorial Hospital in Chattanooga on Wednesday, January 16, so that her mother could attend. Danette was helped into the dress bought for the mother of the bride, had makeup applied, and was wheeled down the hallway in her bed and transferred to a wheelchair so that she could accompany her daughter down the aisle. It was a beautiful ceremony. When it was over, and medical personnel were attempting to return her to her bed, Danette was extremely exhausted. Before they took her away – in typical Danette style – she admonished, "Be sure the doctors and nurses get some of the wedding cake."
- *Her pride in her family, and the responsibility of a mother in rearing daughters.* After her first major surgery in 2002, she was in the intensive care unit, under the influence of pain medication, when the younger daughter, Anna, came in to see her. Danette's first question to her: "Do you have your homework done?"

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- *Her sense of humor.* Even in the hospital, it was on display. Jenni's husband-to-be, Tony Giannourakis, told Danette he had to leave the hospital to pick up his sister, coming in from Greece, at the airport in Atlanta. Shortly after leaving the room, he learned that the flight had been delayed for a time. When he came back into Danette's presence, she looked up and said, "Well, this must be Groundhog Day" (a reference to a movie in which a man finds himself living the same day over and over again).
- *Her commitment to the mission of Life Care and the people she served.* She is the only associate to win the Corporate Support Award twice. She pushed herself to come to work when she didn't feel like it – even after chemotherapy treatments. "On the last day I could have a good conversation with her, she asked me if I was going to the office that day," husband Terry relates. "I told her no. So she said, 'Well, you need to call Steve (Ziegler) and my department.' There were a couple of items she feared would fall through the cracks."
- *Her habit of deflecting concern about herself, and refocusing attention on the needs of others.* "Oh, I'm OK," she would always answer when questioned, "but (to the inquirer) how are you doing?" Inevitably, if the subject of her adversity and how she was dealing with it came up, she would respond: "I just want to be a blessing to someone."

She could say that because of the presence of God in her life and the blessings she felt she had received from Him. In a conversation with Kelly Wilcoxon shortly before she entered the hospital this last time, Danette acknowledged that she was "very tired," and at times the thought of death had been frightening. But then, she added, an angel had appeared to her in a dream. "I'm not afraid anymore, because that meant to me that God is with me and I'm not alone." The angel was assurance that God was her help, her comforter, her deliverer.

Terry reported that about 6:30 a.m. Monday, Danette passed peacefully into the arms of her Maker.

And Danette, rest assured that your heart's desire became reality. You were a blessing to me ... and to every person who came to know you.

--Beecher Hunter