

## A Runner in Charleston

It was Sunday morning, May 29, 2005, at 8:00 a.m. My wife, Lola, and I had just been seated at The Bookstore Café at 412 King Street, just off Marion Square, in beautiful Charleston, South Carolina. The evening before, she and I had attended the wedding in Charleston of Jennifer Matthews, the daughter of Doug and Janice Matthews of Cleveland, Tennessee. Janice worked with me as executive secretary in the Office of Corporate and Community Relations at Life Care for 13 years.

Lola and I were still talking about the simple, yet elegant, ceremony, the beauty of the bride with her long, blonde hair done up with curls cascading from her crown and the awesome gown that she wore, the strikingly handsome groom, Wes Meador, in a dress-white Navy uniform, and the inspiration of the ceremony itself (while there are a zillion weddings, no two are alike).

We had just been handed a breakfast menu when I looked through the front window and noticed a tall, athletic-looking man, probably in his early 50s, coming into view. He was jogging, but slowed his pace to a walk – and then began picking up debris in the street – a glass liquor bottle, a crushed soft-drink can, pieces of paper here and there. That was the weekend of the Spoleto Festival and, let me tell you, that is quite a party in Charleston. Every hotel room for miles around was taken, and tents for vendors were all over Marion Square, in particular, as well as other locations.

Crowds, of course, mean refuse, and plenty had been scattered from the night before. To this solitary runner, however, such items were not to be left on the streets or the sidewalks; they should be properly deposited in trash bins for disposal. Collecting garbage was not his job; no, he was out for a Sunday constitutional. But he couldn't pass up what he regarded as a blight upon the city – at least, what he found along his path.

His commitment to this voluntary effort impressed me. Obviously, here was a person who took great pride in the place where he lived. He couldn't clean up the entire city, but he could do something about what lay before him. I watched him go out of sight, down the street and around the corner, collecting unsightly articles and putting them in receptacles. And I appreciated what he was doing. Charleston is a charming, Old South city that seduces tourists with its architectural uniqueness, its unforgettable cooking and its gracious hospitality. It will remain so if its citizens model what this man felt about the community where he lives.

That kind of dedication to cleanliness and attractiveness of environment should rule at every one of the centers operated by Life Care and American Lifestyles.

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And it is an attitude and practice that should be manifested in every associate. If there are cigarette butts in the driveway, pick them up. If there is clutter (of whatever description, large or small) in the hallway, see that it is removed.

On any given weekend, motorists who happen to drive by Life Care's Campbell Center or the Corporate Plaza in Cleveland may find Forrest Preston, the company's founder and chairman, at streetside gathering cans or bottles thrown from passing cars the night before. He doesn't want that blemish on the place where he works.

If Mr. Preston can do that, so can I. And so can each and every associate at the place where he or she is employed. Just as was true of that runner in Charleston, the act demonstrates vividly the pride we hold for Life Care and its mission.

--Beecher Hunter