

# The Secret Santa

Just prior to the 2006 Christmas season, Larry Stewart, 58, a successful businessman from Lee's Summit, Mo., revealed that he was the Secret Santa who had been doling out \$100 bills to the needy every Christmas for the past 26 years.

In a story published in *USA Today*, Stewart said he decided to go public after it became apparent that a tabloid newspaper was going to reveal his name. He hoped to inspire others to become Secret Santas.

In the winter of 1971, Stewart was working as a door-to-door salesman when the company he was working for went out of business. Stewart quickly ran out of money. He had not eaten in two days when he went to Dixie Diner and ordered a breakfast he eventually admitted he could not pay for. Ted Horn, the restaurant owner, acted like he found a \$20 bill on the floor underneath Stewart's chair. "Son, you must have dropped this," Horn said.



"It was like a fortune to me," Stewart said. His response was to vow, "Lord, if you ever put me in a position to help other people, I will do it."

Eventually, Stewart became a success, and made millions in cable television and long-distance telephone service.

Over the years, Stewart estimated that he had given away about \$1.3 million, for which he had been amply rewarded. "I see looks of hopelessness turn to looks of hope in an instant," he said. "After all, isn't that what we're put here on earth for – to help one another?"

Every day, in the centers of Life Care and Century Park, and in the work of Life Care at Home, our associates answer Stewart's question with their actions. They may not have millions of dollars – or \$100 at a time – to give, but they bring their professional skills, administered with love and compassion, to the people entrusted to them.

And they, like Stewart, look into faces that change from hopelessness to hope and gratitude.

--Beecher Hunter