

LIFEnotes

UNWRAPPING LIFE'S GREATEST GIFTS

December 11, 2024



Dear Friends:

The holidays are upon us – we’re already busy decorating our homes inside and out. We’re already planning get-togethers and meals with family and friends. We’re already buying and wrapping presents. We’re already gathering to watch “Miracle on 34th Street,” “It’s a Wonderful Life,” “Love Actually,” “Home Alone,” and other screen classics. And we’re already gazing at the lights of Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa as beacons on the path to a bright 2025 and beyond. It is truly a most magical time of the year.

What makes it so magical for me is the very spirit of the season – the spirit of giving. For when it comes to the true meaning of the holidays for me -- and I hope for all of you -- I will quote the iconic line from the editorial written by Francis Pharcellus Church in the New York Sun on September 21, 1897, as a response to a letter from an eight-year-old reader: “Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.”

How could there not? As Mr. Church wrote in his editorial – one that is the most reprinted newspaper editorial in the English language and that has been translated into more than 20 languages and adapted as television specials, a film, a musical, and a cantata:

Santa Claus, he maintained, existed "as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist."

I wholeheartedly agree. All I do is think of the transformative things we at LIFE have engendered with such “gifts,” with “our love and generosity and devotion.”

Consider the countless thousands of lives saved by the “gift” of mobile emergency intensive care unit ambulances to Magen David Adom, Israel’s national emergency medical, disaster, and ambulance services. MDA’s most highly trained paramedics staff these ambulances and carry special equipment and sophisticated technology for the treatment of cardiac and stroke patients, and victims of severe trauma, thereby enabling paramedics to perform complex procedures that are so often the difference between life and death.



Magen David Adom’s most highly trained paramedics staff the mobile emergency intensive care units donated by Lois Pope.



On Sunday December 8 we celebrated the dedication of the 17th ambulance I have donated to Magen David Adom. In recent years, I have been “gifting” these ambulances in honor of dear friends, and this one is no exception. It was dedicated to the Honorable David B. Cornstein, the former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary and former chairman and CEO of the New York Stock Exchange, and his wife, Sheila Cornstein. It was also a tribute to Moti Ferder, co-founder of Lugano Diamonds.

These ambulances are certainly not the only way “our love and generosity and devotion” have saved lives. Dozens of military veterans suffering in the disabling throes of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury have been given a new lease on life, thanks to our “gift” of Certified Service Dogs through the Pups4Patriots program with our longtime partner American Humane. We now know definitively that these dogs make a profound and transformative difference: A first-ever study conducted earlier this year by Dr. Maggie O’Haire of the University of Arizona, under the auspices of the National Institutes of Health, linked the pairing of service dogs with military veterans to lower PTSD severity, odds of PTSD diagnosis and other negative mental health symptoms.

Pups4Patriots will once again be a beneficiary of proceeds from our annual Lady in Red Gala; our 31st is scheduled for Sunday, March 2, at The Breakers Palm Beach and will feature entertainment from crowd favorites Jay Leno and Paul Anka.



Speaking of the Lady in Red proceeds, “our love and generosity and devotion” are also manifested in our support of Lois’ Vision4Kids, a new beneficiary of our gala. This is a program with Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, the top-ranked eye hospital in the world. Through it, we are giving the “gift” of sight to thousands of underprivileged children whose vision is impaired in some way, making it hard or even impossible to see the blackboard in their classrooms or to read their assignments. The endeavor affords them free vision screenings, two pairs of prescription glasses, and a pair of sunglasses.



“Our love and generosity and devotion” is also reflected in our support of Lois’ Food 4Kids, another beneficiary of the gala. Through this program at Palm Beach County Food Bank, we are giving the “gift” of sustenance to the “Tiny Tims” in our region. I’m sure we all know that he was the main character in Charles Dickens’ A Christmas Carol and represented the less fortunate in society. Unfortunately, far too many children in the county are just like him, going hungry every night. Our initiative, though, is making a difference by providing them with backpacks filled with healthy and nutritious meals, snacks, and beverages when they are not in school – on weekends, holidays, vacations, and extreme weather emergencies when schools are closed.

These are just several examples of how “our love and generosity and devotion” is benefiting those “Tiny Tims” in Palm Beach and beyond. Indeed, our “gifts” are making a deep and everlasting difference in so many lives, in so many ways, and in so many places here, across the country and around the world. So, yes, Virginia, there will always be a Santa Claus – at holiday time and throughout the rest of the year, as long as there are people like all of you who support LIFE’s work.

And as Tiny Tim, himself, might say, ‘God Bless Us, Every One.

With love always,

Lois

Some Things in Life are Worth Repeating



Anonia, a cloned black footed ferret, has successfully given birth to two healthy offspring, after mating with Urchin, a three-year-old male black footed ferret at the Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute (NCZBI) in Front Royal, Va.

Wildlife conservationists are celebrating a big milestone reached by a little black-footed ferret and her offspring, born at the Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute earlier this year. The significance of two healthy ferrets born to Antonia, a cloned female, "cannot be overstated" in the world of wildlife conservation, said Ben Novak, lead scientists for Revive & Restore, a biotechnology company that collaborated with the Smithsonian. Because black-footed ferrets are endangered, "this represents a number of world firsts," Novak said, and hopefully, the kits will contribute new genetic diversity to the species.

"It's the first cloned black-footed ferret to have offspring, but also the first clone of any endangered species to produce offspring to help save their species," Novak told USA TODAY.

The Smithsonian National Zoo did not respond to a request for comment.

The successful reproduction of a clone is a landmark "proving that cloning technology can not only help restore genetic diversity but also allow for future breeding, opening new possibilities for species recovery," the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in a news release this month. The kits are a female named Sibert and a male called Red Cloud. They were born in June, along with a third who died shortly after birth, according to the agency.

Sibert and Red Cloud could make an enormous contribution to the species because their mother was cloned from a black-footed ferret from the 1980s, named Willa, who had no offspring. Because Willa is unrelated to all other black-footed ferrets alive today, her DNA was previously "completely lost" the black-footed ferret population.

All other black-footed ferrets in the U.S. are descendants of just seven other animals, and Willa's biological samples contain "three times" the genetic diversity held in the black-footed ferret population, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said.

"It's the first time people have been able to reach back into the past and restore lost genetic variation with a female," Novak said.

A couple of other black-footed ferrets have been cloned from Willa in recent years, but Antonia, who was born last year, is the only to have offspring.

Novak told USA TODAY that Antonia independently chose her mate, a 3-year-old named Urchin, and said he is "absolutely thrilled" about Sibert and Red Cloud. The new kits are now nearly 5 months old and the official announcement of their birth was delayed until Nov. 1 to ensure they were in good health, he said. "It doesn't matter if we make a thousand clones, if none of them have babies it never reached the goal, so these two babies are such a pivotal landmark moment in history," Novak said.

SAVE *the* DATE

**LOIS POPE AND LIFE CELEBRATE
LIFE'S 31ST ANNUAL**

LADY IN RED GALA

**MARCH 2, 2025 ✨ 6PM
THE BREAKERS | PALM BEACH**

**STARRING GLOBAL SUPERSTAR
PAUL ANKA**

**AND COMEDY ICON
JAY LENO**

Reserve your tables and sponsorships early for what promises to be a truly historic event.

Proceeds Benefit:

Disabled veterans through the Pups4Patriots initiative at American Humane and South Florida youth through PBC Food Bank's Lois' Food4Kids program & Lois' Vision4Kids program with Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

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