

This month we will dedicate our newsletter to the life and memory of Shirley Murinko. Shirley went home to be with her heavenly Father on April 21st, after a brief illness. As the Lord's servant for more than 2 decades at The City Gate, an enormous void remains. Please pray for Shirley's family and also for The City Gate in the days, weeks and months to come.



"He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds."

~ Psalm 147:3 NIV



Memoirs of a beloved friend

By: Andra Phelps

For over 24 years I've been privy to much of Shirley's life, her loves, her heartaches, and her victories. Our lives have weaved in and out, occasionally only crossing paths, some years doing life together, side by side, or, when our office chairs faced the opposite direction, you could say we did life together "having each other's backs!" However, in all the time growing our friendship, there are many things I either overlooked, or never realized about Shirley until recently. I'm thankful for the opportunity to listen to friends, family, volunteers, and co-workers share their memories at the celebration service on May 14th, my eyes opened to many more aspects of "Shirley" and how she impacted the lives of others. But that's the nature of relationships, isn't it: Discovering deeper through time, the value and heart of a person, as you water the relationship with an ear to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to receive. It just so happened that the corner house I grew up in is only a few blocks away from the home John and Shirley raised their boys in. My younger brother attended U-High with Shawn Murinko, Shirley's oldest, but it wasn't until a year after I married that I actually got to know the family, Shirley quickly becoming a close friend. An article in the Spokesman Review about an inner-city ministry feeding and loving on the poor and homeless of Spokane captured my attention. After reading and looking at the picture with it, I felt the Lord tug on my heart to go volunteer at The City Gate. With a shortage of space and equipment the volunteers stood next to each other serving soup and sandwiches, smiles on their faces, as men, women, teens, and children that would make their way past the gate.

In that first year volunteering, my heart grew to love John and Shirley as I witnessed many occasions of their devotion and sacrifice, not only toward their family, but to a community of people that often gets pushed aside or swept under the rug, much of the "regular" community hoping THEY would just go away. Shirley was instrumental in facilitating events to bring moments of relief and hope such as an "Annual Day at the Lake". Organizing all the details, including car rides and/or a bus to take people out of the daily struggle of downtown life, many lonely, lost, and broken individuals were whisked away for an all-expense paid, fun day of swimming, playing softball, fellowshipping and laughing, as they filled their bellies with tons of BBQ food. The day would come to a close with Pastor John offering up the final meal: the gospel of Jesus Christ, baptizing people in the lake! I would watch Shirley observe the fruit of their labors, blessed by the peace and joy she witnessed in the homeless individuals and residents of downtown Spokane that attended who would otherwise be stuck in their daily struggle of survival.

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One particular evening, a middle aged homeless man stumbled into The City Gate and was so intoxicated that he “drained his stomach” at both ends (My attempt to say it nicely). Pastor John grabbed my husband and a couple of other men as they proceeded to take this man into the bathroom, strip him of ALL clothing, wash him head to foot, and put clean clothes back on that we found in a pile of donations down in the basement. There weren't any shoes that would fit, and since there was no way to “clean” the boots that were soaked in diarrhea, John cut the toes out of a pair of old donated boots and put warm socks on the man until something else could be figured out. As the wife of a pastor to the streets of Spokane, this was the life Shirley willingly participated in and supported day in, and day out.

As the years passed by, Shirley and I built a friendship based on trust and honesty, one that I felt safe to share all my good, bad, and ugly, and in return, Shirley did the same, divulging her mind and heart with its ups and downs. I can attest to Shirley's ability to listen with great patience, both personally and from what I witnessed in ministry together. On numerous occasions she stopped all demanding her attention to tend to various women who would come in to The City Gate, asking to speak specifically with Shirley. Although she always stood on a firm foundation of right and wrong, there wasn't any condemnation that came from her, only compassion. When in struggles of my own, she always made me feel like I had her undivided attention, regardless of what she had on her plate to get done that day. It's a gift. One that Shirley humbly walked in daily, never bringing attention to herself or looking for applause.

Camping trips, dinner dates, and overnights at the Murinko house brought us even closer. Some of my fondest memories are when Shirly would get her spare room ready for my husband and I to have a sleepover. Sometimes I would come out to the property by myself. Shirley and I with grandiose plans of staying up like teenagers, stuffing our faces with snacks, engaging in “girl-talk”, and watching movies into the wee hours of the night, inevitably turned into two middle aged ladies ready to hit the pillow by 10pm. If John didn't beat me to it, I would get up before her every morning and make breakfast.

Shirley and I both loved crafts and gardening and we would chat about all the projects we wanted to do together however, most of our time at her home was spent sitting in the living room. Me on the couch, and her in her recliner to the right of me, we would easily sit for up to 5 hours or more, scrolling through social media, Pinterest, or personal pictures, occasionally blurting out in laughter and sharing something funny or ridiculous that we found! This was a friendship made in heaven. One where we could rest, with no pressure, completely content being with each other without needing to entertain the other. If there was a need to open up about something we were dealing with, we would stop and take the time to discuss marriage, kids, ministry, health, or whatever was on our mind.

If you've been around Shirley for any length of time you know that her family meant everything to her. Quality time spent with her was most treasured. One of her favorite things to do was to bake something sweet and delicious for the family, especially when it involved a Grammy-granddaughter date! She would light up telling me about the phone calls and surprise visits from her boys and grandkids, and the vacation get-aways she would plan well in advance to take with John. She loved how John went out of his way to put a smile on her face, cooking for her, surprising her with beautiful jewelry, or building things for her to put in her garden. Their marriage, like any, had its challenges, some days harder than others, but through it all, they established a solid testimony of Love, Forgiveness, Commitment, and Friendship! High school sweethearts, the care and concern John consistently showed towards Shirley for over 40 years was proof that God had knitted them together.

John shared a little with me about what Shirley has done to make him the man he is today: “The love she had for the Lord and me will forever be kept close to my heart. She loved her family and friends deeply, never expecting anything in return. She taught me to always do what brought glory to God, without being judgmental; to be honest even if it was painful; to laugh and enjoy the moment. We were privileged to grow up together and learn what is most important in life: To be strong and courageous and to face life as a gift from God. I learned to walk by faith and not by sight and that God WILL be faithful.”

My heart is filled with gratitude for the gift of friendship I have had these 24+ years. And yet, somehow, it's through Shirley's death that I find myself grasping, to a much greater degree, the impact her Love for God, family, friends, The City Gate family, and to the lost and broken on the streets of Spokane, has had on all. Lifting up my voice at the memorial to lead those gathered in worship, I was overtaken with the realization that Shirley is now a “heavenly witness”, standing face to face with the One who paid the ultimate price with His selfless Love. Hebrews 12:1-2 states, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him (reconciling mankind back to the Father) endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus didn't consider what He wanted, what made Him comfortable or happy, but the bible tells us, it was a joy in his heart to suffer the cross for the purpose of bringing us back into a right relationship with God, for all who will BELIEVE! That is what Shirley is experiencing right now, the fruit of the labor of Love through Jesus Christ, that it's like no other. I can hear the cry of her heart... that we would dig deeper in our pursuit of knowing the magnificent God she stands before, that we would discover daily the value of walking and talking with Him, as we water a personal relationship with Him and those He has brought near to us with an ear to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to receive.

Our board of directors' words on Shirley

Shirley was always so intentional with those she sought to befriend and connect with Christ. Her very strong and gentle loving spirit would leak out of her when she entered into the life of someone who was in distress. So many times she allowed herself to be vulnerable to others. On occasion this would result in her being deeply wounded by another, but she would recover and then enter right back into the life of another wounded person. Her firm, genuine love for the lost and hurting was so apparent to everyone who knew her. For over 20 years she faithfully served in ministry alongside her loving husband, Pastor John at The City Gate. Shirley has left a great legacy in the lives of those she touched. I can only imagine the glory of her homecoming to the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for showing us personally the love of the Savior.

By: Rich Paulsen

The word diligence has come to mind. She loved flowers, her office work at The City Gate, and the people who came through the door. First, she was diligent in starting her flowers from seed, nurturing them in the greenhouse and planting and watering them. She kept the records of donors and employees in an accurate/diligent manner, so they too would grow. Mostly she loved the clients. She was diligent in ministering to them – she treated them like her flowers: nurturing them with the Gospel and caring for them as they grew in faith.

By: Bill Davis



From Family & Friends...

Joyce – A Light: “Shirley gave so much. Her smile was like a light!”

Misti - A Teacher: “Shirley taught me to believe in myself. It was an honor to know Ms. Shirley and she will be missed very much.”

Heather – A wonderful Grammy: “She loved flowers, her grandkids, and traveling. One thing that impacted me personally was going up to her house every night to talk to her. I could tell her anything and everything! We both always looked forward to our nightly

Resident of Alberta House - An Encourager: “She always had encouraging words. Shirley would smile and say it's okay, God's got your back.”

Pastor Zack - A Gardener: “Shirley planted seeds of compassion, kindness, courage, mercy, and Love. Shirley sowed both natural & spiritual seeds and now is reaping the reward of the greatest seed ever planted: Jesus face to face!”

Brenda - A Mentor: “My husband and I got clean and sober a few years ago. My husband got a job at The City Gate and said they were like a family there so I applied for a job there also. I was new to Christ and didn't have any real role models. Shirley, Bonnie, and Andra took me under their wings, showing me how to be a strong Christian, wife, and mother.”

...SEEDS SOWN INTO THE GARDEN OF LIFE



The City Gate

To Reclaim, Rebuild and Restore, Lost and Broken Lives

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[The City Gate Spokane](#)



www.thecitygatespokane.org

A Gathering Place...

“Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest” — Matthew 11:28

Donations can be made to The City Gate in Shirley’s honor at: www.gofundme.com and search “*Shirley Murinko*”

We would like to offer a special **THANK YOU** to First Presbyterian Church for hosting the memorial service for Shirley. Your historical church offered an elegant setting to honor our friend.

We would also like to recognize Zach Chamberlain for officiating. Zach has been a friend to the Murinkos for years. Having moved home to Pennsylvania, Zach flew in to officiate and celebrate her life with us. **It was an honor!**

THANK YOU to everyone that provided food and drinks for Shirley’s Memorial Reception. It was truly a community effort that resulted in a feast for family and friends.

To Sharyn for the center pieces, table covers & place settings... **THANK YOU!**

To Kylie for working tirelessly so that Ruthie’s Corner Espresso could be open, **we APPRECIATE you!**

THANK YOU Pressworks for your rushed printing and mailing. You made it possible to effectively reach out with our post cards.



Without the support of volunteers who give their time and energy to this ministry, The City Gate would not be the haven it is to so many people. Whether you come once a week or once a year, you have contributed to keeping this place up and running. Your donations, regardless of time, money, food, prayers or clothing, have done so much to help the people who walk through our doors everyday. As pastors and as Christians, we want to thank you for heeding the voice of the Lord and ask you to keep us in your prayers as we continue this journey.

Love, Pastor John & Shirley