

The Power of Purpose

By Gayle North

"Make a pact to remind yourself often of this secret; you can't give away anything you don't have. Then work on your personal program of self-love, self-respect, and self empowerment, and create a huge inventory of what you wish to give away.

Purpose is about serving. It's about taking the focus off of you and your self-interest, and serving others in some way. You build because you love to build. You build to make others happy. You design because your heart directs you to. But those designs are in the service of others. You write because you love to express yourself in words. But those words will help and inspire readers."

- Wayne Dyer "10 Secrets for Success and Inner Peace"

This past Sunday, the Missoulian published an article about Lillie Mae Dixon who knew her purpose and knew how to give. She passed away recently. I was deeply touched by the article, written by Meryle Johnston, one of Mrs. Dixon's second grade pupils in 1953. Merle wrote this letter to Mrs. Dixon's family. Merle Johnston, himself a teacher for 34 years says, "I attribute my career much to her touch on my life as a 7-year-old. Believe it or not, I can still remember Lillie Mae Dixon very vividly."

He goes on to say, "Our second-grade class was quite small, numbering in the 20s. I remember the room, decorated with plants, pictures, and blackboards. I remember the afternoon sun streaming in through partially opened blinds and hanging plants. I remember a very beautiful woman standing in front of the room speaking with the softest voice I have ever heard. Her voice was so reassuring, so comforting- almost dreamlike. She never had to speak loudly to us. I'm not sure why; maybe because the gentleness calmed us so much. I remember one of my friends getting a small eraser stuck in his ear and became very upset. Mrs. Dixon calmly used a pair of tweezers to remove the eraser. She never disciplined my friend. She only used gentleness."

Meryle continues, "I remember most her stories. She would read to us each day and we would beg her to read all day long.... It wasn't that we were lazy and didn't want to work. It was because her soothing voice almost led us into a dream world. I remember her smile as she read and how she used her voice inflection to add more excitement to the story. She would always leave us hanging. She would stop reading and say, "Tomorrow we will continue." We would all moan in agony because she would always stop at the most exciting part."

Meryle says that he still reads to his high school students and they beg him to continue as he stops at the "appropriate time."

"Mrs. Dixon made it seem as if life was always wonderful, happy, and exciting. This truth has remained with me for all these years – that no matter how bad things may be, there is a sun shining and there are wonderful things around us if we only look. "She taught with 'tough love,' inspiring us to achieve but learning how important 'sweat equity' was."

Meryle has this quote by Haim Ginott on his classroom wall and believes it is the spirit of the creed that Mrs. Dixon lived.

"I've come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized."

Mrs. Dixon influenced many hundreds who have hopefully influenced many hundreds more as Meryle Johnston has.

As parents, friends, brothers and sisters, we all have our own sphere of influence. We also have the opportunity to hurt or heal, to be tools of torture or instruments of inspiration. Everyone around us benefits by our love, gentleness and good humor.

I like this anonymous quote.

The beauty of love is this: It never fades away, it comes to us in a moment and stays with us forever. Unlike lust, it never dies.

May we all locate the Mrs. Dixon part of ourselves and express it in the world.

Gayle North offers Personal Coaching for Positive Change using recently developed empowerment technologies to clear mental and emotional blocks that keep people stuck in unhealthy habits and prevent them from performing at their highest potential in school, sports, relationships, work and finance. Call 406-837-1214 to learn how you can STOP SMOKING IN ONE HOUR and for coaching in person or by phone.

changeiseasy@montanasky.net

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