

# Maggie Lee for Good honors memory of girl killed in bus crash

September 24, 2009

SHREVEPORT, La. (ABP) — The parents of a girl who died this summer from injuries received in a church-bus wreck are asking 13,000 people to keep her memory alive by doing something good on Oct. 29 — which would have been her 13th birthday.

Maggie Lee Henson, one of 23 youth and adult sponsors injured when their bus from First Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., blew a tire and overturned while en route to a Passport youth camp in Georgia July 12, [died](#) Aug. 2.



Church-bus crash victim Maggie Lee Henson, pictured her with her Chihuahua Ellie, won't be around to celebrate her birthday Oct. 29, but thousands of people are planning to keep her spirit alive by performing a good deed for someone in her honor.

Her parents, John and Jinny Henson, documented her three-week struggle for life at Blair Batson Memorial Children's Hospital in Jackson, Miss., in a [journal](#) on a website called CaringBridge.com.

Kelli Alamond, a member of First Baptist Church in Texarkana, Texas, didn't know Maggie Lee personally but was touched enough by her story to start and administer a Facebook prayer group for her and others from the stricken Shreveport church.

After her death, Alamond thought about her own twin boys, who had recently turned 13, and realized that if not for the tragedy the Hensons would have been gearing up for Maggie Lee's birthday bash. Rather than letting the occasion go unnoticed, she issued a challenge on Caring Bridge for 1,300 people to commit to performing "demonstrations of Christ's love" in her honor on Oct. 29.

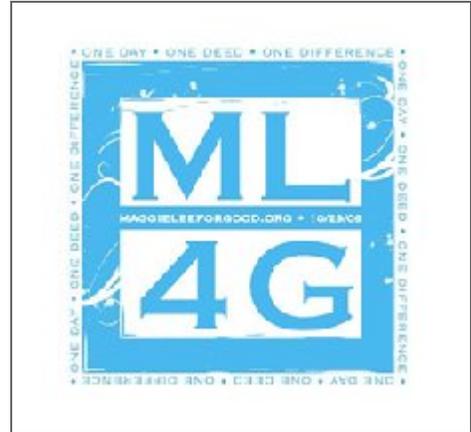
Jinny Henson loved the idea. She set up a Facebook group and sent an invitation to everyone in her address book, about 800 people. Within 24 hours, 1,500 members had joined. That number quickly doubled, and she upped the challenge to 13,000. As of Sept. 24 when this story was written, membership in the group had grown to 8,948. Other Internet users have joined through a [website](#),

The theme "Maggie Lee for Good" is adapted from the song "I Have Been Changed for Good," which was sung at her funeral service at First Baptist Church on Aug. 6. It is from Maggie Lee's favorite Broadway musical, [Wicked](#).

"Maggie Lee was the kind of young lady who creatively loved people," says the Maggie Lee for Good website. "Whether it was asking her mom to pull over and buy a hamburger for a homeless person or sticking up for a friend, she made the world a better place with her presence."

[Ideas](#) for honoring her memory include having a Maggie Lee For Good

Party, which involves inviting friends over who each bring a new toy to donate to charity. Another suggestion is simply picking up the phone to call an estranged friend, acknowledging that life is too short to bear a grudge.



Alamond, who is originally from Shreveport and has friends and family who attend First Baptist Church, was one of thousands of complete strangers who took Maggie Lee's story to heart and wanted to do something to help.

Alamond said starting the Facebook prayer group helped ease her own restlessness, and it wound up being more of a blessing than she ever imagined. She said she was amazed at the number of people who joined the group — but what surprised her most was not the number of people who were praying for Maggie Lee to recover, but that so many were deeply affected and changed by reading about the accident.

One mother wrote to say she had been strung out on drugs for years. Reading about the Hensons' love and concern for their daughter, she thought of her relationship with her own children and decided to turn her life around and enter drug treatment. A father decided he was working too much and didn't spend enough time with his kids. A mother who struggled with depression realized she had much to be grateful for and for the first time began to think about the afterlife. In all, hundreds wrote to say the journal was a wake-up call for them in one way or another.

One woman wrote John Henson, who serves on the staff of the Shreveport

church as associate pastor for emerging ministries, to tell him that, because of Maggie Lee, she stopped to give lunch to a homeless man she had passed up many times before.

"I am truly shocked that Maggie Lee's story has touched people so profoundly," Jinny Henson said. "Every day, we get e-mails about how people woke up in the middle of the night interceding for her and how God used that experience to completely change their lives. Now that she is gone, people are doing all kinds of wonderful things because of her story and that is amazing, as well."

"It is almost as though God has raised peoples' spiritual antennae because of this," she said. "As wonderful as that is, I will always wish I could've seen my child grow up — but I guess that's why God is so much higher than we are, because he gave his Son."

The Hensons recently [met](#) country pop singer and songwriter [Taylor Swift](#), who said she would be happy to be part of Maggie Lee for Good. [Erin Anderson](#), a wedding photographer in Houston, added her support by designing a logo for Maggie Lee for Good.

Henson said there are no words to describe "the awful process of adjusting to the loss of a child." Little things like going to the grocery store and starting to pick up a cereal product before remembering that the only person in the house who liked it is no longer there can reduce her to tears.

"It is unnatural to bury a child, and with them you bury the parent you were to them," she said. "So a piece of you dies, as well."

Several people commenting on the Maggie Lee for Good website mentioned birthdays of lost loved ones of their own.

Jinny Henson said she and her husband found it natural to express themselves throughout their ordeal.

"People have responded to John's writing because he is honest about what people call the greatest loss a human being can suffer, losing a child," she said. "I am a Christian speaker, as well, so I, too, have seen the value of communicating honestly where we are."

"I think so many people have shared their burdens with us because there are so many people out there who walk around with broken hearts, even in the church," she said.

*-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.*