

"The Bottle of Children's Tylenol "



It's that "bottle of Children's Tylenol" that still wakes me up at night. . .but more on that in a minute. First let me extend my heartiest thanks to you for the many ways you join Any Baby Can in serving vulnerable children and their families. As the holidays approach and our thoughts focus on family and abundance, for me, the work we do together always takes on a special poignancy.

Think about what holidays mean to you. For me, growing up in a (very) small middle Georgia town thick with extended family, holiday memories always include food. . . Aunt Flo's apple dressing, Aunt Betty's deviled eggs, Aunt Marinelle's Jell-O Salad. As the weather became colder and Thanksgiving rushed toward Christmas, special traditions gave roots to my childhood. . .the annual, all afternoon search on my grandparent's farm for the "perfect" tree. . .the trip "all the way to Atlanta" to ride the Pink Pig at Rich's Department Store. . .the children's cantata at the church when all the kids were convinced we did sound, or at least look, like angels.

As my own children have grown, our family has created new traditions and continued others. . .running (or thinking about running) the Turkey Trot, watching the Dallas Cowboys game after a meal which seems to always include that Jell-O Salad (which my kids have never really liked), and our annual search through the grocery store parking lot for the "perfect" tree. Since our extended families are far away, we have also tried to make a tradition of connecting to others in the Austin community. We've "pulled turkey" in preparation for the Salvation Army holiday dinner, substituted for vacationing Meals on Wheels drivers, and shopped for families who need support and are often far from their families, as well. It was this time of year 7 years ago that I got waylaid by this holiday habit.

In November of 2000, I was working in the corporate world and had volunteered to coordinate a group of folks from church who wanted to sponsor the neediest families from Any Baby Can with holiday gifts. One evening, I settled in to review a pile of wish lists turned in by the families. The first wish list was from a single mother with three children, two of whom had special healthcare needs. With growing interest I read down the page, feeling the mother's love as she described what her children most wanted from "Santa." Then, at the bottom of the form, in the small space reserved for declaration of her holiday wish, she had written, "a bottle of Children's Tylenol."

During this holiday season, as you continue your favorite traditions, I invite you to add a new one to your list: partnering with Any Baby Can to make a difference for the youngest, sickest and poorest children in our community. The memories will last a lifetime.

In Holiday Spirit,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellen".

Ellen Balthazar
Executive Director
Any Baby Can