



*The Western Slope's*

# Sunny Side of Life

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Sunny Side UP (A)

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## *Sunny Side-Up:*

### **Simple Ways to Become Happier and Healthier**

## *Christmas, Altruism and the 'Gift for Montrose'*

**(Montrose Healthcare Mini-Grant 2007 - Call for Applications!)**

By Cathy Hartt, RN, CNM, MS  
Health, Life and Business Coach

The year was 1998. The place was a little town called Angleton, Texas. The story has to do with finding a meaningful way to stay connected with my home community of Montrose.

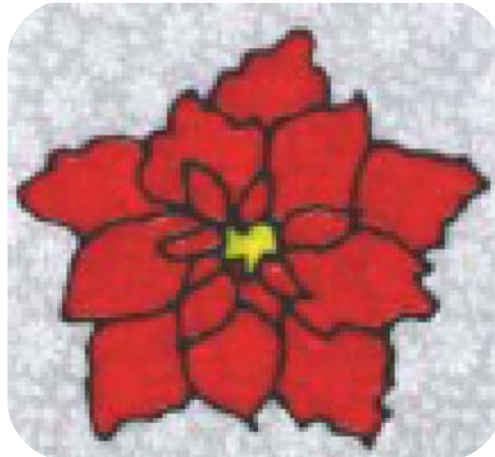
It was my friend Jackie who suggested creating a healthcare mini-grant that would be awarded to an agency or individual that was making improvements for women's health. I immediately fell in love with the idea. And every Thanksgiving, I look forward to announcing next year's award.

To apply, interested parties submit a short (1/2-1 page) proposal for how they will use the funds - these letters are due by January 31st every year. For me, reading these letters is a happy time. I can see how so many in Montrose are making a difference for the health of the women in our community. Another great moment is when I actually send the funds to the winner each spring.

I have given the mini-grant every year

since 1998. Something about the process made my life a better place because I knew I was (in a very small way) helping others who were making a real difference for a community I love.

This was long before I became a life coach in 2004, so I did not realize what a powerful thing altruism is in creating happy, meaningful lives. I still remember learning of a happiness exercise



where we tell people to go do 5 good deeds a week several weeks in a row. The altruistic givers measure their happiness both before and after participating in this exercise. The exercise may be more powerful than Prozac! It is, perhaps, no surprise that people become happier when they reach out and help others.

When I tried this exercise - it was little things that I did often that made a real difference. I held a door open for a man in a wheel chair at the hospital. I bought lemonade from some young kids with a corner stand. I took a woman from my

church who had cancer for ice cream. I felt great each time I reached out to help someone.

Then I read of an exercise that made me think of the Montrose Mini Grant I had created. This exercise was about finding a charity you really believe in to give to each year at the holidays. The author of this idea suggests staying away from the big corporate fund drives. He suggests finding something that each person is individually passionate about - and creating a unique way to give to this cause.

Another idea is to take this one step further and donate time, talent or treasury to something our loved ones feel passionate about as a Christmas gift. I took this up - I donate to an after-school-program each year for my son-in-law and give to various causes in the names of my daughters each year. Nothing brings tears of joy to the eyes on Christmas morning like these altruistic gifts. The joy last longer than those video games, too.

So, back to the Gift for Montrose - if you would like to apply - send the application letter (as previously discussed) to me by Jan 31, 2007 if you are interested in receiving this year's award. The gift is in the neighborhood of \$200.00 and is generally paid in the spring. My mailing address is 600 N. 4th, Montrose, CO 81401. I welcome you to apply - even if you have applied and won before.

I wish each of you happy holidays - and I hope you will consider adding a little altruism to your Christmas list this year.

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ABOVE: My grandmother, Pearl Hartt, in her wedding dress circa 1907. After the wedding, they visited Niagara Falls and headed west to Rawlins, Wyo.

## *Over Easy:*

Short Stories about My Family's Western Slope Pioneer Days

### **Sir, They Shot Wilkes Last Night**

Imagine what it would be like to be raised in Puritan New England in the late 1800's. Then imagine a several-day trip via train to the Old West as a new bride.

When I was a child, my mom told me that when my Grandma Pearl (namesake of Pearl Lake State Park Colorado) got off the train from her honeymoon, she was shocked when one of granddad's sheep hands met the train to tell my grandfather, "Sir, they shot Wilkes last night."

It was years before I would learn the real story - or at least the old-timer's versions of the story of Wilkes. I was interviewing these old-timers for my future history book, and two of them told me a

story about a shooting of a man named Wilkes - both stories occurred the same year my grandparents were married.

For the first time in years, I remembered mama's story about grandma.



The more interesting version of the story has to do with smuggling prostitutes into the sheep camp. The somewhat less interesting has to do with trespassing. Stay tuned to our spring issue to learn more about the two versions of the Wilkes story.

One thing is for sure - I wish I would have taken time to write down those stories my mom and her family told me about the Old West days!



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**Cathy Hartt, RN, CNM, MS**

**Health, Life and Business Coach, Advanced Practice RN**

**600 North Fourth St., Montrose, CO 81401**

**Phone: 970-240-9562 E-Mail: [CathyCNM@MSN.com](mailto:CathyCNM@MSN.com)**

**Web Site: [www.HarttWeb.com/Montrose](http://www.HarttWeb.com/Montrose)**