

No More Tears—A Caregiver’s Story

Preston Moore, 40, gives one simple reason for why he became his mother’s caregiver.

“I couldn’t stand to see her cry in the nursing home.”

The nursing home Preston references is Charleston Manor, in Charleston, Missouri, a town of almost 5,000 in the Bootheel.

Preston’s mother, Ella Moore, 68, lived in Charleston Manor for a year, after two strokes left her paralyzed on the right side and in a wheelchair, unable to do much physically except feed herself. All the while, Preston visited her faithfully and continued his job as an assembly worker at Havco Wood Products, a manufacturer of hardwood oak flooring for 18-wheelers and trailers in nearby Scott City.

But while Preston worked, he kept seeing his mother’s tears. He quit his full-time job at Havco three years ago and moved his mother back into her home—one they now share—along with four of Preston’s five children, aged nine through 17.

“My brothers and sisters say I’m the softest one in the family,” he says.

A typical day for Preston and his mother begins at 4:35 a.m., after Ella awakens and needs to go to the bathroom. Preston transfers her to the wheelchair with a built-in commode.

“She gets down sometimes because she can’t do for herself,” Preston says. “But I tell her, ‘You did it for me; you took care of me as a baby.’”

Next comes the first of four insulin shots, and heart and blood pressure medicine Ella needs throughout the day, followed by bathing, dressing and breakfast. Preston fixes all of her meals except lunch, which comes from Meals on Wheels.

Perhaps Preston picked up his culinary skills from his mother, a former cook for Warren E. Hearnes Elementary School, named after Missouri’s 46th governor, a lifelong Charleston resident. Today’s breakfast is biscuits and gravy, followed by a fruit snack around 10 a.m., a fried pork chop for lunch (“Mom didn’t like the Meals on Wheels chicken and dumplings,” he laughs), and a polish sausage with sauerkraut for dinner.

“I cook her dinner in the morning, before I go to my part-time job at the Susanna Wesley Family Learning Center from 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.,” he says. “It’s only a minute away from our house, and I can come back and check on her a lot. I work in their after-school program that feeds kids. The kids really keep me going, keep me laughing a lot.”

Preston's advice to other caregivers is simple, as simple as the reason he assumed a caregiving role for his mother.

“Always love the one you take care of. Let ‘em know you love ‘em.”

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