

## The Making of an Angel

Every time I drive down Kerns Road a new feeling of life comes through me. I see memorials set out for students from two local high schools. One memorial in particular always catches my eye; an array of bright flowers and a little bench sits under the shade of a tall oak tree in memory of two North Meck girls. Two angels not just in heaven, but also in the community, two faces of the Angels of '97. Mandi Meador and Laura Barnette were normal high school students, full of potential, when a tragedy cut their promising lives short. Imagine being the parent of a beautiful daughter and having her being taken away? At a time when mothers should be helping their daughters pick out prom dresses and preparing for spring break, Sherry Harkey and Jane Bolton were facing the most trying time of their lives – dealing with the death of a child. Their story could have ended there, but they refused to let a tragedy end up as exactly that. Sherry and Jane joined with other parents and family members who had lost children and started something meaningful, The Angels of '97. The Angels of '97 organization is in its 16<sup>th</sup> year and continues to grow. These mothers and other community members are perfect examples of moral leaders who turned tragedy into triumph. 'Angels' comes together every year to host a spaghetti dinner and golf tournament to raise money for scholarships for area students. These women reach out to help others with the Angels of '97 Ministry whose sole purpose is to help others with the grieving process after losing a child. I look up to these women because if they could take something so tragic and turn it into something wonderful, everyday troubles can be overcome. Sherry said in an article that during her time at the ministry there are times when grief becomes too much and she can't help but feel the rush of emotions that come with the loss of a child. The important thing is she has never let this stop her mission to help better her community and reach out. Walk in to any 'Angels' event and you will see the smiles of these two brave women. Over the years, the organization has raised over \$400,000 in scholarship money. While I know that the road has not been an easy one, it is meaningful and has turned something tragic into something very powerful and important in this community. Because of Sherry, Jane and other courageous parents, the legacy of these original "Angels" and many more will live on forever. Sherry Harkey and Jane Bolton are true moral heroes to me for their outstanding courage and perseverance in the face of tragedy.

*"Some people come into our lives and quietly go; others stay for a while and leave footprints in our hearts and we are never, ever the same."*

*Bradley Tyler*