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## WEDNESDAY'S WOMAN

### Pepper looks back on life of service

ANDREW CRITCHELOW The News-Enterprise

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Alice Pepper, pictured with her son, Daryl, served for more than three decades as a local educator. In her post-retirement, she has volunteered to organize a weekly Bible study at the Glen Dale Center in Elizabethtown, has volunteered with CASA of the Heartland and has served as a state board member for Sunrise Children's Services.

Submitted photos

Throughout her life, Alice Pepper of Elizabethtown has served as a mentor for area youth. This passion has stayed with her since she was a child living at the now-defunct Glen Dale Children's Home.

Born in Jefferson County, Pepper moved to the Glen Dale Children's Home in 1954 when she was 10. Founded in 1915 and initially known as the Kentucky Baptist Children's Home, the campus closed in 2009 and transitioned to a new facility in Elizabethtown known as the Glen Dale Center, designed to provide housing and opportunities for at-risk teenage girls.

When Pepper attended the Glen Dale Children's Home, she said she was one of more than 200 children who were there because of family neglect or abuse.

While at the Glen Dale Children's Home, Pepper was tasked with establishing the campus's first library and served as the dining room supervisor. She said she also was selected to be a mentor for five 11-year-old girls at one point during her time there.

"I was given a lot of responsibility and I enjoyed it," Pepper said. "I had a good life there."

At 16, Pepper graduated from Glendale High School and went on to study at the now-defunct Bethel College in Hopkinsville.

Upon enrolling at Bethel College, Pepper said she intended on either pursuing nursing or education. But after a long period of time spent in the hospital because of a severe case of tonsillitis, Pepper decided nursing wasn't for her.

Pepper met her husband, David, in Elizabethtown in 1959 but they did not start dating until after she began studying at Bethel College. She said David's best friend, Richard Bogard, also was a student at the college and would drive her back to Hardin County during holiday breaks.

According to Pepper, Bogard used to drive a car, that once belonged to David, to the college. Upon receiving a public speaking assignment in which she was to give a speech personifying an inanimate object, Pepper chose Bogard's car and visited David, who was studying at Campbellsville University, to learn more about the vehicle.

When Pepper underwent a tonsillectomy in 1960, David came to visit her in the hospital. Shortly after, the two began dating and they got engaged in 1961. The next year, Pepper transferred to Campbellsville University and married David during a semester break.

Pepper began teaching while still in college in 1963. She later went on to earn her master's degree in 1973 and Rank I teaching certification in 1976 from Western Kentucky University.

David also pursued a career in education, teaching for Hardin County Schools for nearly three decades before starting his own trucking business.

At one point, Pepper and her husband both taught sixth grade at Lincoln Trail Elementary School.

"It was OK to call him Mr. Pepper at school but he didn't like it when I got home and called him Mr. Pepper," she said with a laugh.

Pepper spent most of her education career as a fourth-grade teacher at Valley View Elementary School, serving with the school from 1971 until her retirement in 1995.

"My philosophy was that you had to educate the whole child," Pepper said. "You were there to increase their academic skills but at the same time you need to be nurturing them to be overcomers and to function well in their environment."

When the Glen Dale Children's Home transitioned into the Glen Dale Center in 2009, Pepper found a new post-retirement calling. Shortly after the new facility opened, Pepper served as a tutor for at-risk teenage girls at the facility and later started a Bible study there, a pursuit she continues to this day.

"The girls I was helping were asking spiritual questions, and this just occurred over and over," Pepper said. "I thought 'There's a real searching here.'"

Working with Tracy Peters, Pepper hosts a Bible study each Thursday, which includes activities and refreshments. She said around 15 girls attend each session, with ages ranging from 13 to 18.

"The word of God and the answers in the scriptures provide help no matter what the problems are," Pepper said.

The Glen Dale Center is run by Sunrise Children's Services with educational services provided by the Elizabethtown School District. Pepper served as a state board member for Sunrise Children's Services from 2009 to 2016. She said her experience volunteering with the Glen Dale Center gave her key insights she took with her to the board.

"I advocated for the staff because I think if you treat your front-line workers very well, it helps the whole mission in incalculable ways," she said.

Pepper also takes part in a Bible study at her church, Severns Valley Baptist. She said the church group has been instrumental in helping her Bible study at the Glen Dale Center by providing Bibles for students.

Last December, the Severns Valley Bible study group helped Pepper raise approximately \$1,000 to provide arts and crafts supplies for children at the Glen Dale Center. Group members also have written letters of encouragement to girls at the Glen Dale Center throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pepper also has served area youth through her role as a volunteer for CASA of the Heartland, which provides court-appointed special advocates for abused or neglected children navigating through the court system. In 2018, Pepper maintained regular contact with a local girl to advocate for her both in and out of court through CASA.

"I felt like I was really contributing to her wellbeing," Pepper said.

Pepper also served as chairwoman for the Christian Woman's Club, now known as Christian Women's Connection. She also has given back through her baking talents, donating various desserts to local charity auctions.

Pepper and her husband have two sons, David and Daryl, and eight grandchildren. David is a farmer and owns Pepper's Hardin County Milling Company in Elizabethtown while Daryl serves as a pastor for Grace Heartland Church in Elizabethtown.

Pepper said she has gotten some first-hand experience in both of her son's professions. She said she has accompanied David on his farm equipment on several occasions and while Daryl was studying at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, he invited her to accompany him during classes.

"I was either riding in the combine or heading up to Louisville," she said. "That was a fun time."

Daryl said his mother always set a good example when it came to her service to the community.

"One of the main lessons she's taught us is the value of giving back," he said.

Looking back on all the ways she has impacted local youth over the years, Pepper said her service would not be possible without those who helped mentor her over the years.

"Having one person who cares about you can change your life," she said.

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