

Saying goodbye to 'Miss Mary': Legendary McDonald's birthday party lady retires

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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GODFREY - Mary Clendenny recently retired from the Godfrey McDonald's, but during her working career, she epitomized Ray Kroc's McDonald philosophy: "If you work just for money, you'll never make it, but if you love what you are doing and you always put the customer first, success will be yours."

"Miss Mary" as she is affectionately known at the McDonald's location and in the public, was also known in years back as "the birthday party lady." She spent more than 10 years conducting birthday parties and worked 18 years total at the Godfrey McDonald's location until her retirement.

In the end, many of the crew had a difficult time keeping up with Mary, who was 82 when she retired. The day she did retire, many customers came in to see her as well as more than 40 crew and managers she had worked with in her time in Godfrey.

Miss Mary talks with reverence about owner Dick Bold and his family.

"I think the Bolds do just consider me part of their family," she said. "When I retired, Dick gave me a beautiful card that I treasure and a nice gift certificate to Walmart and a card that I could eat anything in the store I want for free forever in retirement."

Miss Mary said there are many things that Dick Bold does each day for others and his workers and he is an incredible boss and owner of several McDonald's locations.

"Dick hires many disabled people to work in the McDonald's stores," Miss Mary said.

"He also hires and helps a lot of college-age kids. Dick is a very sensitive man to others. He started out flipping hamburgers at Burger King. If the floor needs scrubbed or snow needs shoveled, Dick will do it."

"I will miss Dick and his family and all the people who work there and customers," she said. "My dad always said I would talk to a fence post and I guess he was right. I loved every one of the birthday parties that I did. In fact, at my retirement party, a couple people came up to me to tell me I did their kids' birthday parties and wanted to wish me a happy retirement. I just loved all those kids. Doing the birthday parties made me very happy."

In retirement, Miss Mary plans to stay active and busy. She will continue to dress up for Halloween and visit the Godfrey McDonald's.

"I love Godfrey," she said. "Godfrey is my home. I have a farm that my two boys take care of in Calhoun County, but Godfrey now is my home. I love it here."

