

Lillian Blanding

Lillian Blanding's story is one of heartwarming faith. This self-described "very easygoing spirit who is easy to get along with" was born in 1954 and raised in Lexington Terrace public housing from age five, "a very nice place to live in those days." She attended Lexington Terrace Elementary, Booker T. Washington Middle, Edmondson High School and Coppin State College. At age 21 she moved into her own apartment in Lexington Terrace and eventually into a Section 8 apartment in Edmondson Village, saving up until she could afford her own home, a Nehemiah unit on Parrish Street in Sandtown where she moved in August 1992. Her jobs included day care for more than 15 years and working at the Department of Social Services from 1989-1996. Proud of having always been a single parent, she raised Keisha (age 31) and Alex (age 19), but her joy of course is her 3-year-old granddaughter Kayla ("I do spoil her, but then again she spoils me too").

Lillian "chased down Susan" and got Alex enrolled in the After-Three program at New Song Learning Center in the Fall of 1992. Alex attended New Song Community Church and told his mom to come one Sunday. Lillian came "and cried through the entire service" (Steve's music played a role); she came back the next week "and cried through the entire service;" she came back a third week "and realized I had found a church home." She says New Song "is a family, what a church family is supposed to be" and that the church "has been there for me." She had colon cancer in 1995, and when she found out the following year she had breast cancer "I was angry and questioned God, 'Why me again?' But I knew I had to go through certain things to help me understand." At first shutting down and staying in bed, what revived her spirits was Alex coming into her room and reading the story of the faith of Abraham and Sarah from a children's Bible; "That blew me away; I got up the next day and have been pushing on ever since." In remission now for 10 years, her cancer "made me realize a lot of things. Today my anger is gone, and I have peace with God."

On to what Lillian likes: going to casinos, socializing with friends ("LaVerne and I are very close and cry on each other's shoulders; we have both lived through things that you can't understand unless you've lived it"), children, seafood, computers, home decorating, and "My #1 hobby is shopping; the adrenaline flows when I find a sale!" She does not like having to prepare food and having her kindness taken for weakness; she says she is working on being a little more firm with people.

By the way, Kayla believes that her grandmother may be the face on the dollar bill...