

Tiny Little Efforts

by Beverly Denver

Recently, I flew to Chicago to celebrate the second birthday of my precious, little granddaughter, Alexandra. I got there on a late Friday afternoon, just in time to help her parents with last-minute preparations for the next day's party.

Walking into the home of my "kids," I immediately found myself knee deep in brightly colored paper streamers and curly ribbons, balloons of latex and Mylar, and a granite-topped kitchen island full of edible goodies. Before I could take it all in — or hug the dickens out of my favorite toddler — my daughter, Nicole, handed me the "Birthday Party To-Do List for Mom." Obviously, she had scribbled this out for me earlier that day and, upon close inspection, I realized she had given all on the list some "serious" thought.

The to-do list included a number of tasks chosen specifically for me — no doubt because of the unique talents and skills I could bring to the jobs! The list included:

- Make your special-recipe, homemade potato salad for 30 people. Don't forget the sweet pickles; do forget the celery.
- De-clutter family room of excess stuff and dust the furniture. Don't overdo; please don't make it look sterile like your house.
- Find good spot for guests to put the birthday presents. Don't fuss with or "fix" gifts already here, wrapped and beribboned.
- Set all necessary items on buffet table. Don't forget: You are not Martha Stewart. Do remember: There's no time to pretend you are.
- Figure out where to display all of Alexandra's stuffed Elmos! And, don't even think about buying any more Elmos before tomorrow!

While looking over my list and contemplating whether or not I should offer up any self-defending comments, I found myself distracted. The others in the room were already tackling their own to-do lists, and watching them was (actually) quite amusing.

Nicole was hanging a "Happy Birthday" banner on the mantel — one with images of Elmo all over it; my son-in-law, John, was taping a "Pin-the-Nose-on-Elmo" game on the wall. Then, with the help of the birthday girl, both began putting up something else — an art piece Nicole had made that cleverly proclaimed, "This party is brought to you by the Letter A and the Number 2."

Seeing Nicole and John tend to the party details — with great care and concern — made me proud and brought a huge and knowing smile to my face.

The scene took me way back — to another second birthday and to memories of all the work that went into making a Cookie Monster Party "just perfect" for another very special two-year-old.

“Oh my goodness!” I thought. “So long ago, but how well I remember all the tiny little efforts that went into making that grand event so successful — so memorable!”

I couldn't help but chuckle to myself and then make note: “My daughter is more like me than she thinks!” (I decided it best not to point this out to her!)

But, now it is two weeks later; I'm back in Houston and still thinking about “tiny little efforts” and what a huge difference they make in the things we do and the people for whom we do them.

Tiny little efforts benefit everybody — our friends and family at home and our associates and clients at work. And, all that is good. But, let us not forget ourselves. By putting forth a bunch of tiny little efforts, it is we who surely benefit most — in that moment and in the treasured moments to come.