



Mary Kent Hearon

Loving South Carolina one heart at a time

Weeks after the flood of the century—arguably a “1,000-year flood”—devastation stretched its soggy fingers across Columbia. Yet within a few days, yard signs reading *I (heart knot symbol) SC, Tied Strong* started popping up in front of the most ravished homes in what some called *Ground Zero*: the Burwell Lane, Rickenbaker Road, and Kilbourne Avenue area. The mysterious symbol brought a glimmer of light into areas of drenched darkness.

When the flood hit, Mary Kent Hearon’s home was unaffected—yet her community was suffering. She had grown up in the Heathwood area and attended Hammond School, but many of her friends and customers lived in waterlogged, badly damaged areas. She was distraught.

Like many of her fellow Columbians, she had difficulty sleeping, suffered moments of guilt, and worried she couldn’t do enough for her struggling neighbors. She was suffering from Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) or “compassion anxiety,” a syndrome experienced by those not directly hit by a disaster.

She decided to talk to the Lord about it. *What do I do God? Show me the path.* God’s answer was the motivation behind the yard signs and matching printed *I (heart knot symbol) SC* t-shirts.

Mary Kent had learned that

contractors, clean-up crews, and other rescue personnel were having difficulty finding some of the residences because mailboxes were obliterated or missing. Besides offering encouragement, the signs would provide space for the home’s address. She planned to donate 100 percent of proceeds from the sale of the t-shirts to flood victims.

“Our state went through so much in 2015,” she says. “I already had the logo, so the t-shirts and then the signs just happened. There is no way I could do nothing, but I really didn’t do anything. God did. God had it planned for those signs to go up.”

Coke Mann, owner of Columbia Development Group, learned of Mary Kent’s desire and asked Capital Sign Solutions of Raleigh if they would donate 200 signs. “This is just one way that Columbia came together for the recovery effort,” he says.

From healing comes healing.

The inspiration for the heart knot design prominently featured on the signs and t-shirts is not a new creation. Mary Kent’s journey with The Heart Knot, her Columbia-based jewelry studio/business, began years before when she was a nutritionist.

She dabbled in jewelry making and thought it would be a good idea to give customers a hand-made dragonfly neck-

lace as a gift for completing a nutritional program. From there, she developed a popular wellness blog, The Heart Beet, that became so well read it turned into a full-time job and took her, for a time, to London.

When she moved back to Columbia and experienced a painful relationship breakup, someone gave her a book, *The Ashley Book of Knots*. She came across the heart knot and began fervently asking God to show her how she might use her skills at jewelry making to create meaningful pieces.

The heart knot felt so special to me,” Mary Kent says. “I did so much research to figure out how to make it, what materials to use, and how to have a business out of making heart knots. God healed me through this time and drew me closer. He showed me the way forward. When I tied a heart knot, I knew I was heading the right way.”

In her quaint studio, which is a short walk through a mini English garden from her cozy, gingerbread-style home, Mary Kent is steeped in color and creativity. Her ideas, works-in-progress, and finished pieces surround her. There, making jewelry, Mary Kent experiences times of spiritual, peaceful focus with God. She infuses love into every piece she creates.

On her business card and website, she shares some of



By Deena C. Bouknight

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hand makes other jewelry items, including various crosses and pendants. She unveils lines for spring and fall, as well as for children and special occasions such as weddings.

For the Love of Columbia

She likens the concept of the heart knot to God drawing us close and keeping hearts “tied strong.” She explains on her website, www.theheartknot.com: “When we come undone, we have to find creative ways to tie our souls back together.”

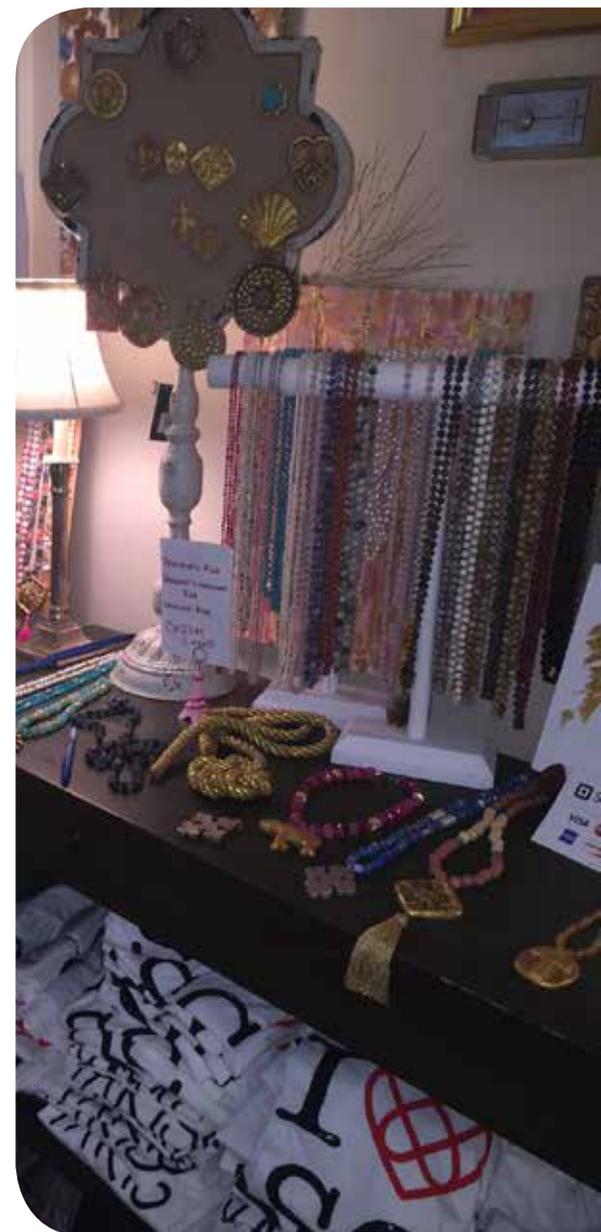
As if speaking directly to flood victims, she makes this final statement, “I know now that God does make all things work together for our good (Romans 8:28).” **ROC**

Mary Kent’s expertise in blogging and social media helped her get the word out about The Heart Knot t-shirts. Sales took off and brought in significant donations for flood victims.

Looking for families and businesses that had been severely impacted, Mary Kent anonymously donated part of the proceeds from the sale of the shirts to Ed Robinson Cleaners, a local family-owned company whose Forest Acres location was flooded with three feet of water.

Not knowing that Mary Kent had just provided funds to assist them, the community-minded family turned around and asked her about purchasing The Heart Knot t-shirts for their employees so donations from the t-shirt sales could continue to assist other flood victims.

“Seeing the logo *I (heart knot) SC* made people smile despite difficult circumstances,” she says.



her story and one of her

life verses, Isaiah 61:1: “He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted.”

The dark-eyed craftsman began making heart knots out of all types of cording—cotton, polyester, metallic, and even sterling and 14-carat gold. Two years ago, after a successful showing at the Holiday Market, she began accepting commission orders, hosting trunk shows, and selling at such sites as Scout & Molly, Cottage & Vine, Inspire Interiors in Lexington, and Silver Paper in Sumter.

The Heart Knot has now become her full-time career. She travels to cities like Atlanta and Charleston to show her creations. Tall, thin, and attractive, she models her jewelry on her website. In addition to the knots, she

To learn more about Mary Kent Hearon and The Heart Knot or to purchase a t-shirt, visit her website, www.TheHeartKnot.com.