

MAY 9, 2010

Moms aren't looking for holiday from family

What they really want today for Mother's Day.

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Every mother has a different vision of what a perfect Mother's Day looks like.

The National Restaurant Association reports that Mother's Day is "the most popular day of the year to dine out." According to the National Retail Federation, Mother's Day is the "second largest U.S. consumer spending holiday," after the December holidays.

Stephanie Cole, of East Lampeter Township, prefers to think of Mother's Day as it was envisioned in 1870 by Julia Ward Howe.

Howe, a social activist and poet who authored "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," wanted to see a day set apart for mothers to work for peace, and to honor their children lost in war.

Howe's vision of Mother's Day didn't take hold. But Cole said she is moved by the possibilities of Mother's Day as "more than just a Hallmark holiday."

For Cole, as for many moms, Mother's Day transcends the commercial and the cliched.

On her first Mother's Day, in 2007, Cole was mourning the heartbreaking loss of her first child, Madeline, who had been stillborn the January before. Cole said she received a card from a woman she had briefly met, who assured her that she was still a mother, even though her daughter wasn't with her. "That meant a lot to me," Cole said.

Cole went on to found the Sweet Pea Project, which has a Web site and newsletter for bereaved parents, and which collects blankets for stillborn babies.

Today, Cole will spend Mother's Day enjoying her two little boys, and said that just like every day, she will "remember the little girl who made me a mother."

Some moms, like Melissa Miville and her mother, Joanne Martin, will spend a good part of their Mother's Day at an event aimed at helping children with life-threatening medical conditions.

For the past 17 or so Mother's Days, Miville and her mom have volunteered at the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Philadelphia & Susquehanna Valley's annual Mother's Day Truck Convoy.

The festivities begin at 8:30 this morning at Burle Business Park; the convoy will depart from there at 1:30 p.m.

Miville, a Mountville resident who also volunteers as a "wish-granter" for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, was a teenager when she first helped out at the convoy. "I think my mom learned about it and she got my sister and I into it," she said.

Miville's sister, Kristy Martin, died in a car accident in 2001. Miville and her mother continue to volunteer at the truck convoy each Mother's Day. In the years since they began this tradition, they've only missed one year — when Miville herself was battling cancer.

"It's a good cause, and it's

nice to see all of the kids so excited and happy, and riding in the trucks," Miville said.

As a cancer survivor, Miville said she feels great empathy for the children whose dreams are being fulfilled by the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and for their parents.

Moreover, she said, "So many people helped me when I had cancer."

So it feels right to her to be with her mom on Mother's Day, helping others, Miville said. And she hopes that, one day, her daughter, who is now just 3, will join them in volun-

teering. "I hope the tradition continues," Miville said.

Many moms say that what they want most on Mother's Day is to spend time with their families. But they have varying ideas about just how to spend that time.

Lisette Colon, who works as a finance associate at the YWCA of Lancaster, said her family has its own special Mother's Day tradition: They travel to Maryland to eat crabs.

"I loved it as a little girl," said Colon, who now has four daughters of her own. "One of my uncles used to take us to this little river by the crab place, and we'd wet our feet."

She said she's not even sure of the name of the crab place to which her family goes; she just knows how to get there. Her relatives and friends eat at picnic tables, and someone brings a dominos table. The women sit back and chat, Colon said, while "the guys play dominoes."

"I say it's not Mother's Day without going for crabs," Colon said. "When I go to Maryland, it's a time to be with family and not worry about anything at home."

When you go out for brunch or lunch, "it's just that hour," she said, while her family's annual Mother's Day crab trek "is a whole experience, a whole day with the kids."

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