

## **HARC Meeting**

**Tuesday, May 10, 2022**

### **Honoring Maurice Johnston, the God's Grace Fund**

We have gathered this day around tables offering a delicious meal and good company. In this setting it is easy to appreciate the many blessings of life. I have the honor at this time of paying tribute to a man who never lost sight of the hand of God's grace upon his life. Through his church, the community and private philanthropy, Maurice Johnston gave back to God in gratitude for all that he had received.

HARC is one of innumerable organizations benefiting from the God's Grace Fund. Established by Maurice, and now under the direction of his son, Mike, this is how it is described by the Community Foundation of Washington County:

God's Grace: a donor-advised fund  
created by an anonymous donor  
for charitable purposes

Each element of this description speaks clearly to the man known by friends and family as simply "Mo". Allow me to explain!

#### First -

Now into a third generation at the helm of a successful business, there is a sense of stability, loyalty, and perseverance associated with the name M.S. Johnston. By God's grace, Maurice invested in the quality of life for generations current and future. Of the nearly 50 donor advised funding streams listed, God's Grace is the only one that has no individual or family name attached. Distribution would always follow the values and discretion of the donor.

#### Second –

It speaks to his insistence that God, not Maurice, should be recognized as the source of all that is good. He had a knack for "overhearing" of a need. Perhaps it was a conversation in a hallway at church, or an employee experiencing a health or family crisis. Quietly and with no fanfare, a donation to cover the cost would be extended. Along with a request that this "be kept between us". So many stories could be told – if Maurice had not sworn us to anonymity!

An entire county was blessed by his sense of humor. Hearing of a unique billboard campaign designed to promote a return to God, Maurice subsidized signs for several years. All black with white lettering and simply signed "God", motorists would be treated to one-liners such as "Don't

make me come down there!” or “We need to talk”. My personal favorite during a blistering heat wave was “You think it’s hot here!” I can just imagine his satisfaction anytime he heard someone curious to know the identity of the sponsor!

Third – Maurice’s giving was motivated by a strong faith, sensitivity to the needs of the community, and a desire to help people. In addition to recurring generous donations, in a single year he donated \$20,000 in matching funds to the Humane Society of Washington County, replacement refrigerators for the Robert W. Johnson Community Center, all the food service equipment for the kitchen at Brooke’s House, significant donations toward the future food preparation/concessions at the Maryland Theatre, donated toward a new passenger van for Girl’s Inc. and was a sponsor of the Community Foundation’s Washington County Gives. More than seeing this as a list of organizations – it reflects the scope of one man’s dedication to helping others achieve their charitable goals.

At Otterbein church, to know Maurice was to be blessed by his values of faith, family and always doing what is right and just. He passed along to his children a sense of civic duty and pride, as well as a firm foundation in faith. Many “tables” have been blessed and touched by the bounty of his spirit and resources. As Mike continues to honor his father’s life of gratitude and ongoing commitment through the God’s Grace Fund, HARC expresses today our words of recognition and thanks.

Respectfully,

Cindy Brown