

Mary Kay Artress

“The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless.” Billy Graham

Mary Kay Artress, class of 1975, was chosen as Alumna of the Year because of her life of service to others. We often honor individuals for their professional success or for their service to humanity on a grand scale, but it is truly the daily small choices that turn ordinary individuals into heroes. Mary Kay is one such hero.

Mary Kay graduated from Georgia-Cumberland Academy in 1975 and continued her education at Southern Missionary College, graduating with a degree in accounting in 1979. After graduating from college, Mary Kay spent the next nearly 30 years, working as an auditor or accountant for not for profit organizations, including multiple Adventist Church entities. In addition to her paid employment, Mary Kay spent 35 years working in children’s ministries at her church, volunteering with kids from babies right up through elementary aged-children.

As she watched her parents age and her father battle end stage Parkinson’s, Mary Kay made the decision to transition into care giving and set her full time career aside. With more control over the hours of her day, Mary Kay also began assisting her younger sister with the care of their special needs son, as well as her other young nephews. Her daily giving of self to family members has been a godsend. Nephews and nieces know their beloved “KK” will always be there for them!

Mary Kay’s willingness to give of herself extends beyond her family to most anyone in need. Cindy Owens Hudson, ’75 writes: Mary Kay Artress quietly entered my life in 1973. She wrote in my *Fountain Reveries* annual that year “thank-you for helping me with Geometry.” I hope I wrote in her annual “thank-you for being a true and forever friend;” though of course I could not have known at the time, that 42 years later she’d still be a forever friend. Registration day for our Senior year, I was too busy doing girls dorm desk duty, and feeling very important, to think how lonely of a day it might be for my freshman brother; but not Mary Kay. She tucked my brother under her wing; saw to it that he had a dining companion and took him on a grand tour of the campus. Keeping connected to her friends is a core value of Mary Kay’s. Everybody else might be getting bogged down with life, but if Mary Kay heard you were flying into Atlanta (pre 9-11) she’d take off from work and come sit with you at your gate, treat you like royalty, and wish you God speed as you boarded your next flight. Her life has been a beautiful picture of selfless service for the Savior. And it’s all from a heart filled with love.”

Helene Harris Elliott, ’75, shares more examples of Mary Kay’s selflessness: “I remember when I ended up divorced and left the Midwest to return to the Atlanta area to be closer to my family and friends. Mary Kay threw a big pool party in my honor to welcome me back and introduce me to her friends. I was overwhelmed with her kind generosity. I will never forget that. As I spent several years in the Atlanta area as a single mom, she would get together with me and my children, bringing gifts. She was so unselfish, warm, friendly, and kind. All from a love-filled heart.”

Classmate Sandra Musgrave Babin recently shared this about her: “She is and was the epitome of a true Southern woman, even as a girl. She befriended an intensely shy girl from up north and made me feel welcome and cared about. Mary Kay has always looked out for me, even when not at GCA. She and her family came to my rescue at the bus station in Atlanta, made me feel welcome at a church I’d never been to, always putting me first before her needs or wants.”

Mary Kay Artress, class of 1975, demonstrates well the mission statement of Georgia-Cumberland Academy: To Know Jesus as Savior and Friend, To Love God and those He brings into our lives, To Serve the church and society.