

and professional friendships, I often spoke of the vision I had for making each month of the calendar year a symbol for one of the 12 aspects of “getting along better” living. Then in late 1989, the founder of Hidden Valley, George O. Parke, called a meeting of Somerset’s youth and leaders to hear about my vision for unifying and uplifting their schools and their community.

From that moment on, this was no longer my story, but the story of the next 30 years of making the 12 monthly habits prove to be effective and COOL! The story stretches throughout western Pennsylvania including Pittsburgh, and, through Rotary International, into the post genocide African country of Rwanda as a youth peacemaking initiative. This part of the story is in a separate chapter, “30 Years of Making the 12 Habits in Action COOL.” Now, 30+ years later, I am still on that path with you, my citizen readers of “The Habits of Unity,” here beside me.

Rebuilding who I was as an adult was a trial and error process, with too many marriages and mistakes of my own making. Each moment that I learned and grew, however, I knew that someday, my sons would be able to take responsibility for their own lives. Then I would dedicate the rest of my own life to helping other kids find peace and kindness at home; a home that Veronda and I didn’t have and that without their father’s presence, I was not able to give to my own sons.



On Rotary International peacekeeping mission in 2006, author, Elaine Parke, was honored to be invited to place flowers on one of the five crypts of the dead at the Kigali National Genocide Memorial. The memorial is the final resting place for more than 259,000 victims of the 1994 genocide.