



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

July 9, 2024

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SHE IS RAMONA AND SHE IS FABULOUS

by **Marilynn Bowler**

Beloved by an army of those seated in the filled ballroom at Charlotte Rotary on Tuesday, Ramona Holloway shared the story of her journey alongside her mother ("Wheezy") during the years Ramona became caretaker and, in a reverse role, "mother" to the woman who had raised her. The Alzheimer's which took her beloved Mom's life did not take her self-respect because Ramona refused to let that happen.

Stating unequivocally that she is not an expert on dementia, Ramona spoke eloquently and candidly about her decision to move her mother into her home ~ at first due to required back surgery and then in order to oversee Wheezy's dementia care ~ as together they traveled the journey none of us wish for and all of us dread. And yet, her message was one of hope and, in the end, quiet peace.

Sharing what she found out from her own experience with an Alzheimer's patient, Ramona made a startling statement that beautifully put things in perspective. She said, "As Mom's dementia took hold, I had to keep in mind that our relationship only changed for one of us and that was 'HER.' I was still her daughter, but she became like a child to me instead of the other way around. And yet, Wheezy didn't realize that and so Ramona had to accept that her Mom was still telling her what to do even though most times it didn't make sense. That was hard for Ramona to manage but she accepted it and kept helping in order to keep her mother safe and alive. "My concentration was to let Mom keep her dignity. My philosophy

was "ABC: Accept. Believe. Connect." And, when Wheezy would have difficult moments, above all DIVERT! Music was cathartic for her mother and it always seemed to be the salvation when times got tough.

During Q&A, **Susie Masotti** spoke of her own experience with parental dementia and the need for showing empathy to which Ramona instantly agreed. She added, "Mom knew how to push my buttons mainly because she INSTALLED them." We all understood, and we laughed.

Ramona demonstrated that she's kept her sense of humor and joie de vie which was so apparent during her entire presentation. She also touched the hearts and souls of those in the room as was proven by the faces of so many who shed tears and showed expressions of sympathy and understanding as she wrapped up her remarks.

Having spent over twenty years on-air with Matt Harris as the "Matt and Ramona Show" took award after award, Ramona, herself, was named the 2009, 2010, and 2011 "Gracie Award" by the Alliance For Women In Media, and she ran away with Charlotte Magazine's "Best Radio Personality" three times. She has taken all of that experience with her into her current corporate role as Community Affairs Manager for Radio-1 Charlotte. How smart that corporation is to keep her with them.

And how smart Charlotte Rotary Program Chair, **Luther Moore**, is to book Ramona to speak on the subject that is so rampant especially among the elderly now.

Ramona Holloway is, indeed, FABULOUS ... in so many ways.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/981622123>
The program introduction begins at approximately 17 minutes and 28 seconds.