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Photos:

Celebrating Mom - After struggling with infertility, iReporter Wendy Bowers is thrilled to be able to share her Mother's Day with her son Nathan, who is almost 4 years old. "I look at my son and am amazed -- not am so lucky to have such a wonderful little boy (although I certainly am) -- but at how honored and fortunate I am to belong to him," she said.

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Story highlights

Readers shared the stories of their most memorable Mother's Day moments and gifts

Many said the best moments came from time together, special surprises and everyday life

Editor's Note: Mother's Day is May 9, 2015. We first shared this story in 2012.

(CNN) — A not-so-gentle reminder: Mother's Day is coming. Maybe your gift is wrapped and your brunch plans booked. Maybe you've already blocked out time to call mom, step-mom, grandmother, den mother -- whoever the person is who fed, cared for, taught and loved you.

Or maybe, like many others, you're just not sure how to say 'Thank you.'

The National Retail Federation estimates consumers will spend \$18.6 billion on Mother's Day this year, about \$152.52 for the average person celebrating the holiday. But [iReporters said their most special Mother's Day memories](#) rarely dealt with the objects they unwrapped, but rather, the ways people showed they cared.

Here are stories to inspire more memorable Mother's Days -- eight ways to feed, care for, teach and love those who did it for you.

Give the gift that can come only from you



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When [iReporter Veronica Pantaleon Mendoza](#)'s daughter was 4 last year and had really only begun to draw. One day, with coaching from her 13-year-old brother, the little girl delivered a few pieces of folded paper to her mom, who was hard at work at her computer at their home in the Philippines.

"Happy Mother's Day, Mommy!" her daughter said.

They were drawings of the family among flowers, the mother in dangly earrings (the little girl's favorite) and mother and daughter, surrounded by hearts, "the two of us showing how much we love each other."

The pictures now hang at eye level in Mendoza's office, so she can see them while she works.

"When I see these drawings, I am reminded of all the blessings God has given the three of us, my family," Mendoza said. "I am encouraged and inspired at how my daughter sees love and joy in simple things. I feel successful as a mother to simply feel her enthusiasm."

Her teen son is no slouch, either, Mendoza said -- drawings, chocolates and roses means a lot, but it's even better than he sweeps up, folds laundry and says "thank you."

"He helps me care for his young sister and always surprises me with a kiss and a hug," she said. "All that, and my daughter's drawings, are the gifts I love most."

Dining out? Choose a special spot

The National Retail Federation reports that about 54.3% of Mother's Day celebrants say they'll be going out for brunch or dinner.

When [iReporter Nicholas Pegues](#) and his brother took their mother, Marilyn Hegman-Davis, to brunch in 2010, they didn't choose any old pancake spot. They surprised her with a trip to Paulette's, a Memphis institution for nearly 40 years. Even more special, Pegues said, was that his mother often spoke fondly of dining there when she was younger.

"I'm a college student. Even if you're on a tight budget, you can still give your mother a quality gift," Pegues said. "Paulette's means something -- it's a trademark. She was real surprised. 'You're listening!' "

This year, he said, they'll have another meal out -- no spoiling the surprise!

Give new moms something to remember

iReporter Noelle Kaye Wilson celebrated her first Mother's Day last year with the best gift, her 4-month-old daughter.

But her husband had a little something else in mind: a pearl necklace, "a timeless treasure that I can wear and think of my daughter and husband every time."

This year, Wilson said, her daughter is still a little too young for homemade cards or gifts, but she's just learning what it means to show love.

"I'm excited for Mother's Day this year because my daughter is now 15 months old and she can show affection now," Wilson said. "She loves to give hugs and kisses and is my little shadow."

Mother's Day: My Mother's Day gift to myself

Take a trip -- or celebrate a big one

Mother's Day usually means a back yard get-together for iReporter Kathi Cordsen's family, but in 2002, Cordsen and her mother took a week-long trip around Washington. They took in the scenery on long drives to Delaware and Virginia, and visited sites like the Iwo Jima Marine Corp War Memorial statue.

Time together was precious, Cordsen said. During the trip, Cordsen's mom blurted out to her daughter that she'd been diagnosed with breast cancer.

Ten years later, Cordsen is happy to say her mom is healthy and living in a retirement community. She comes to visit about twice per year, and always loves a cards or flowers in between.

"We had a wonderful time and even though 10 years have passed, neither one of us (has) forgotten one moment of this trip," Cordsen said.

The women did forget one thing on the trip: a camera. So Cordsen picked up postcards of all their stops along the way. She made a collage of all the sites they visited, and still has it today.

Give her what she always wanted -- for you

iReporter Sandra Kent said she'll always treasure the handmade cards her sons made for her, and she often buys clothes and jewelry for her own mom, who loves to dress up.

But this year presented the golden opportunity to fulfill a dream.

"My 90-year-old mom always said, 'Sandra, I want to make it to Alex and Michael's graduation,' " she said. "I want to see them get their diploma from college."

Kent's son Alex is graduating on May 12 from the University of Oklahoma with a double major in economics and business -- the same school where Kent's father graduated.

They will go to Alex's graduation this Saturday as a family, and celebrate everyone there.

Remember her, honor her and share her story



Mother's Day 2011 was the last one iReporter Jannet Walsh was able to celebrate with her mother, Margaret, who had a stroke in 2008. In her last few years, Walsh always shot photos and videos of their visits together, and with Walsh's West Highland White Terrier, Andrew.

"My mother had a dog just like him, so I would tell her it was her dog, and she would hold onto his leash, even in bed up to the last few weeks before she passed away," Walsh said. "I

Related Video: iReporter's tribute to her mom 04:27

was with my mother to the end, holding her hand as she passed away."

As Mother's Day approached, Walsh wanted a way to remember her mother and 'best friend,' even as she grieved.

She decided to build the memories she captured during those last few years into a video memorial -- images of her mother with Andrew or quiet moments at her gravesite.

[iReport: Watch Walsh's video tribute to her mom](#)

"I wasn't sure if I should put the ending part in the video with me crying, but thought that was a real reflection of a love for a mother, and missing her," Walsh said. "I thought it flowed good to tell the story with few words, just show my mother as she was -- happy, and loved till the end."

Learn to understand each other

[iReporter Loriann Nickmann](#)'s mother, Nancy Taylor, had always been demure, a little shy, but never critical or overbearing. She'd wanted her daughter to be the same, and even took her to Sears for weekly sewing and cooking classes "for what seemed an eternity."

Decades later, Nickmann still wasn't much of a cook, but they deviated from the usual hotel brunch on Mother's Day 1991, and had a cookout at Nickmann's San Diego home with her mom, her step-dad and one of her brothers. The steak was overcooked, Nickmann remembers, but it was still a nice meal.

There was something else, too: Taylor brought along a gift for her daughter, her not-so-June-Cleaver with a salty sense of humor -- "Truly Tasteless Jokes" by Blanche Knott.

"Oh, I knew you'd love it," she remembers her mom saying.

It was "completely out of character" for her mom, but Taylor asked her daughter to read aloud some of the bawdy jokes.

"I did read some of the more tame jokes and can still see her laughing and throwing her head back a couple of times," Nickmann said. "It is a memory I'll cherish for the rest of my life."

Nickmann's mother died from colon cancer in December of that year. Friends who live nearby will deliver flowers to her mother's grave this week. She still has the book of jokes her mother gave her, plus scrapbooks and photos of her mom, like those from her 1979 wedding. Over time, Nickmann said, she sees even more of her mother in herself.

"Make the time to work out your stuff with your parent, " Nickmann said. "Just take 10, 15 minutes and reflect on your mom. Ideally, we'd all like to have a good relationship with our Mom. Like any relationship, friendship or marriage, it takes two to participate and do the work necessary for a successful relationship."

[Mother's Day: Vanessa Williams and mom on stardom, struggle](#)

Celebrate what it really means to be a mom

Mother's Day was a touchy subject for [iReporter Wendy Bowers](#). Her mom had walked out when she was 18, and Bowers had tried for years to become pregnant without success. She had almost convinced herself she wasn't meant to be a parent.

But three years after she gave up on having a baby, Bowers discovered that she was pregnant. Six weeks earlier than expected, little Nathan arrived.

Mother's Day became a favorite holiday for Bowers again, replacing the painful memories from the past. That first year, Bowers' husband was out of town, and Nathan, only 10 months old, was sick with a stomach bug. Bowers said she spent the day holding him between loads of laundry.

"The only thing that he wanted the entire day was to be cuddled by his mommy -- and even though it was definitely not the most glamorous part of the job, I would not have been anywhere else in the world that day," she said. "I wouldn't trade that first Mother's Day for anything -- I waited to be a mommy for far too long not to appreciate just how lucky I was, puke and all."

Now Nathan is a beautiful, healthy 4-year-old boy, but she'll always remember that day of snuggles.

"I'm pretty sure Mother's Day will always be a reminder to me of just how incredibly lucky I am to even be a mom," she said.

How will you celebrate Mother's Day? Tell us in the comments, or share your most memorable Mother's Day moments [on iReport!](#)



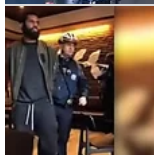
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