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Dad and his boys enjoy hiking and spending time together doing all sorts of activities. From left, are: Brandon, 13, Rick and Justin, 8.

A Work of Love

A father helps others to thrive after the loss of his true love

BY JESSICA SIBLEY
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Rick Miller is a lot of things.

He's a loving dad and a successful businessman.

He's a guy who knows the value of life, because a life dear to his was taken far too soon.

Because of that, Miller's daily routine has changed a lot since March 2006.

A devastatingly tragic night took the life of his beloved partner and stay-at-home wife, Sandra.

Miller understandably takes a somber tone when he talks about that day.

He recalls a relaxing Thursday afternoon nearly five years ago, when he came home to Sandra and their two boys, Justin

and Brandon.

It was going to be a long weekend for the Millers, as he had taken Friday off and the boys were glowing from a teacher's in-service day.

"That's when Sandra complained about having a headache," he said. "It was nothing to get overly concerned with."

That night, however, Miller awoke to his wife making gasping sounds in her sleep. He was unable to figure out what was wrong and Sandra was unable to communicate. The family rushed to the hospital.

"It was soon after that we learned she had had a major brain aneurism," he said. "And just like that, she was gone."

Miller had spent 20 years of his life working as an engineer at Lift-Tek in Westminster, but



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There is nothing quite like the love a mother has for her children. Sandra and almost 3-year old Justin embrace.

recently gave it all up to help people outright.

"When Sandra passed away, it took me a good four years to get my feet back on the ground," he said. "But my life had taken a turn and things were clearly put into perspective for me. I wanted to do something that was going to make a difference. I felt compelled and wanted to spend the rest of my life doing something that would help people, not just work for a nice paycheck."

That's when Miller decided to open a Home Helpers branch in Oconee. The company specializes in home care, assisting in senior needs, helping new mothers with everyday tasks or simply providing companionship to a lonely neighbor.

With hospice care being provided, Miller is confident that his experience with loss will help him offer the kind of solace that people need.

"Having my boys to raise has helped me significantly when it comes to dealing with Sandra's death," he added. "Staying strong for them has made me stay strong for myself."

When asked if he thought his wife would be proud of him and his recent career change, he managed a simple yes before turning his tear-filled eyes aside.

"I know what a helping hand can do," he said. "I know what a simple caring conversation can mean to someone. I was there, heck, sometimes I still am. But that's



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Rick and Sandra Miller on their wedding day.

what I wanted to provide to those who need it. And although it's now my business and livelihood, I want each potential client to know that I am full of compassion, and they will get the best care possible."

With his work, he's trying out a new endeavor that he hopes will take off soon.

"I want my and employees and I to help write memoirs of the seniors we care for," he said. "Their stories are so interesting. Think about all they've lived through. Think about all the changes they've seen. Sitting down and putting some of these stories on paper is priceless. Priceless for their family, friends and community."

In a similar way, Brandon and Justin will rely on their own sweet memories of their loving mother and their father's stories about her as they grow up.

Brandon, now 13, was eight when Sandra died. His account of the day he learned of her death makes any heart yearn to

take his pain away.

"When we got home, our cousins, aunts, uncles and everyone else was there," Brandon said. "There were food and drinks everywhere. They kept saying they were sorry, and I was starting to get very worried. Dad finally sat me down on my bed and right before he could start talking, I started crying. That's when he told me. My brother started crying once he noticed that I was, but he was a little too young to know what was going on. This was the worst day of my life, but we got through it."

And that's exactly what Miller hopes to do for the families that enlist his help.

"We want to help other families get through it," he said. "Whatever 'it' may be."

For more information about Home Helpers or Miller's story, contact him at (864) 972-4900 or at rmiller@homehelpers.cc.



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Rick Miller lives for his sons, Justin and Brandon. His wife, Sandra, died suddenly in 2006. Small notes — like this one from Justin — help his days go by a bit more easily.



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Justin visits his mom at the mausoleum.