

Four little words

These days, there are so many words in the English language that seem to make our blood boil when we hear them spoken aloud: gasoline, taxes, crime, unemployment, health care, etc. Go to a party and feast on fancy tidbits and enjoy a glass of wine or sweet tea and, sooner or later, someone will mutter one of those high BP words and the once subdued conversation about whether Brad will marry Angelina will turn downright ugly.

To me, there are more important things to talk about. The words that annoy me most come in a group of four: "It can't be done." Call me the eternal optimist, an aging



Generations

Peg DeMarco

Pollyanna living in a dream world, or anything else that would describe someone who loves a challenge — that's fine. But to me, the words, "It can't be done," hurts the human spirit more than standing in front of the gas pump and uttering a few obscenities.

The worst thing that can happen to the next generation of young women is to believe that they can't do something simply because it's difficult to do. Apathy and indifference have always been the weeds that mix in with the seeds in one's bouquet of life. Just because the odds seem insurmountable doesn't mean they can't be tackled — even if failure looms at every turn.

Some women who believed this accomplished so much in their lifetimes that I thought I would share some of their stories with you. For instance, Jane Addams, who never graduated high school, became a pioneer for women's rights during a time when women were not considered equal to men and later went on to win the Nobel Prize. Did Jane face frustration as she was preparing to change the way America thought? I'm sure she did.

Not many people know who Florence Bascom was, but she collected many "firsts" in a geological career. She was the first woman to receive a Ph. D. from Johns Hopkins University, the first woman geologist hired by the USGS, the first woman to present a scientific paper at the Geological Society of Washington, and the first woman officer of the Geological Society of America. What makes Florence so inspiring? While Florence was in class at Johns Hopkins, she had to sit behind a screen in class because women were not yet allowed to be seen or sit next to male students. That got me wondering if Florence ever felt lonely, peculiar, ostracized, or defeated. She probably did and quite often wanted to tear down the screen, but she persevered.

Betty Friedan created the first major structure of the women's movement when she organized the National Organization for Women in 1966. I was a year out of high school, but I remember all the adversity N.O.W. experienced in those formative years. But Betty and her followers didn't quit and went on to make a presence in our culture that still advocates rights for all women.

Barbara McClintock, a faculty member at the University of Missouri in 1936, left in 1941 because she felt she had been discriminated against because she was a woman. Did that make Barbara bitter, throw up her hands, and take up needlepoint rather than

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“Apathy and indifference are weeds that strangle the seeds of determination in one's bouquet of life”

GAB

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pursue her dream? No, because we know that she later received the Nobel Prize in Medicine/Physiology and was the first woman to do so!

In fact, women have been winning Nobel Prizes since 1903, two years after the Nobel Foundation was established. Thirty-five women have won the prize so far in different categories. Marie Curie, of course, was the first woman to win for her work in physics and the last was Doris Lessing for literature in 2007. Toni Morrison, the eighth woman to win and the first black woman to receive the prestigious award for litera-

ture won hers in 1993. Her book, “Beloved,” was published in 1987 and won her the Pulitzer for fiction. And who could overlook Mother Teresa most known for her humanitarian work all over the world?

I don’t know what they and all the other women pioneers were thinking as they were making a difference in the way we live today. But I do know that those four little words “It can’t be done” couldn’t possibly have been part of their vocabulary.

Right here in Morganton, we’ve got a bit of a challenge going on that involves both men and women. A couple of us from Friends for Animals are traveling to Washington, DC in July to participate in lobbying efforts before the

North Carolina Legislature, asking them to strengthen the laws on dog fighting, puppy mills and animal cruelty.

We’re gathering endorsement sheets, accepting letters and e-mails, and sending out information to every animal humane society and every veterinarian in the state. It isn’t an easy chore, but we didn’t expect that it would be. And we have four little words, too, but they are slightly different than the ones above and that makes all the difference. Our slogan has been and always will be “It CAN be done.”

FOR THOSE who want to find out more about our efforts, contact Friends for Animals at 433-1115 or stop in to sign the endorsement at the animal shelter located at 417 Kirksey Drive.