WHAT’S IN A NAME?

By Kari Foy

Hugo. Katrina. Matthew. Harvey. Irma. It only takes a mere mention of those names to conjure up images of rising water, high winds, bare grocery store shelves and Jim Cantore holding on for his life.

The naming of storms has a long history. The system that we are familiar with today was established in 1953 and, as many know, originally included only female names. In 1979 the list of names was expanded to include male names. I guess “way back then” (when I was a mere 5 years old, by the way), females were offended by that practice. In today’s world, I can imagine many women would fight for the right to be associated with something so strong and unpredictable that it keeps the whole Eastern seaboard glued to social media. Funny how times change. Speaking of change, the 6-year rotating list is modified when a storm causes such damage that the repeated use of its name would not be welcomed. Or if it shows up uninvited on your wedding day like Irene did for me in October 1999.

Why do we name these storms? It’s simple. Storms are given short, distinctive names so communication regarding the storm can be quick, clear and concise. Not to mention, a catchy name heightens public interest and keeps our hashtags interesting (#irmageddon #irmagerd #irmagonnaneedadrink).

I’m a member of a group with a pretty catchy name: PEARLS. I’m also proud to say that I was one of the women sitting around the table in 2006 when we established our name. We chose the name PEARLS for many reasons. First, it stands for Philanthropic Empowerment Among Rural Lowcountry Sisters. Yes, I know, that’s quite a mouthful, hence the acronym. But those words were not chosen randomly. We wanted people to know that we are a group of local women who are choosing to better ourselves and our community through compassionate giving. Second, we couldn’t think of a better image than a PEARL to represent our group. An individual PEARL is valued for its natural ability to overcome the obstacle of a piece of sand and transform it into a lustrous sphere. And PEARLS become even more stunning when they come together in a spectacular string. We PEARLS sisters like to think that we are no different.

I could go on and tell you about all that PEARLS of Hampton County has accomplished over the past 10 years, or what exciting plans are already being made with Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, where the fund is held. But I’d rather tell you in person. So consider yourself invited to our fall membership gathering on October 26th at 6:30 PM. We’ll be gathering at the Gazebo in downtown Hampton for a tailgate with all the fixin’s. Come dressed to support your favorite football team...and don’t forget to wear your PEARLS.