

# CityNewsOHIO

## Mother Love returns to television with nurturing, humor and health

by Sandra Clark

3/16/2005

Mother Love will be returning to television this week in a new series that ties together several things that are very important to her – talking, nurturing, humor and health.

The Cleveland native comes back to television in a show called “dLife TV,” which is all about living with diabetes. The show airs on cable station CNBC at 7 p.m. Sundays and premieres March 20.

The woman, who loves to run her mouth, will feel right at home in the talk show format. She has been dazzling listeners with homespun, home girl wisdom for years. The world got a taste of her mother wit in the late 1990s when she hosted the syndicated daytime talk/relationship show “Forgive or Forget.”

The show also exposed her nurturing side. While other daytime talk-fests invited guests to rip each other to shreds, sometimes literally, Mother Love asked her guests if they could overcome past differences. Shows generally ended with a warm hug from Mother Love.

That same affection will be injected into “dLife TV,” Mother Love promised. She is on a mission to help sufferers manage the disease, which is something she has learned to do over the years.

Mother Love, who will not disclose her real name, learned she was diabetic in 1990.

However, she has been managing diabetes throughout the heyday of her career, which included hosting a late night show on FOX, “The Mother Love Show.” She also appeared on television shows such as the “Fresh Prince of Bel Air,” “Married with Children” and “The Hughleys” starring fellow Clevelander Darryl Hughley. She was the coveted center square on “Hollywood Squares.”

Mother Love started out as a stand-up comedienne, has done motivational speaking, been a talk radio hostess and has written two books titled, “Listen Up Girlfriends” from St. Martin’s Press and “Forgive or Forget, Never Underestimate the Power of Forgiveness,” published by HarperCollins.

Throughout most of this, she admits her lifestyle may have egged on her condition.

“I was coming from so many bad habits,” she said. “I smoked. I drank. I ate all the wrong stuff.” She laughed about cooking complete meals of fried chicken at midnight. Meanwhile, the clock was ticking as warning signs called out for attention. They included excessive thirst, blurred vision, irritability and depression.

“If I had paid attention to the pre-diabetic symptoms, I could have staved off the disease.”

But the cues she received from her family hurt her chances of overcoming the disease.

“African Americans have a real cavalier attitude about diabetes,” she said. “I grew up with a family of diabetics not taking it seriously.”

The wake up call came when her older sister died 2003 at 51. She has a brother, who also has the disease. Both her parents died young from health catastrophes that Mother Love believes were related to diabetes. Her mother died of a massive coronary at age 59. Her father died of a heart ailment in 1963. He was 31.

“When my sister passed away that took me out,” she said, adding that it was time to conquer the disease. “I decided, I’m going to die from something, but I’m sliding in sideways going ‘Whoa, what a ride!’”

She had already quit smoking and drinking. Now, it was time to get rid of the weight. Although she had shifted to reduced-fat, low-salt foods, she still was a nocturnal eater. So she stopped that and added exercise to the menu.

She has lost 105 pounds in just under two years going from a size 22 to a size 6. She boasts of posing alongside Olympic gold medal swimmer Gary Hall Jr. while wearing a Speedo swim suit and a flowered bathing cap.

In addition to guests such as Hall, she will appear alongside co-hosts Jim Turner, Nicole Baker and comedian J. Anthony Brown. Turner was best known for his role as Kirby on the HBO series “Arliiss.” Baker was Miss America 1999. Brown appears daily on the syndicated radio program with Tom Joyner. The four are all diabetics who will discuss such topics as cooking, medications, new treatments and care giving, Mother Love said.



“We took our blood sugars right on camera. Some of us were high. Some of us were low,” she said in an interview at CityNews headquarters last week.

“We’re all real brave.”

Mother Love appears to be a woman who is not afraid of too much. She grew up in the projects of Cleveland’s Central neighborhood at 55th Street and Quincy Avenue. At that time, the corner was called the Double Nickle, she said.

Mother Love described herself as a mouthy little instigator in her days at Outhwait Elementary School and Concord Junior High. Her outspokenness got her in trouble once, but it sealed her destiny as a caregiver. She once shouted at a teacher for abusing a fellow student, and was beaten by that teacher for her trouble. The situation was resolved with the teacher’s arrest and loss of credentials.

Mother Love was 14, bruised, traumatized but otherwise unchanged. She kept on speaking up and caring for others.

After graduating from East Technical High School, (she would not tell what year), she entered Ohio State University. While at OSU, she picked up the nickname Sister Love. She was the kid who could cook and would feed those who would have gone hungry during finals. She always had bail money for those who resorted to the five-finger discount when they ran out of money for textbooks. She was a constant shoulder to cry on for such students as the one who attempted to sell blood and found they had leukemia.

“I was like cheap therapy,” she said. “They used to tease me and call me Sister Love.”

All her gifts came together while she lived in Columbus, the home of OSU. She had been talking so much trash that she had paralyzed her friends with laughter.

Mother Love recalled the friend said, “I’ll give you \$50 if you can do that to strangers.”

Mother Love took the bet and did her first stand-up comedy gig in a biker’s bar in Columbus in 1977.

She killed.

At that, she began a 30-year career that combined humor with nurturing and her God-given gift of gab.