

CHARACTER



Generosity

January 2007

Generosity: Sees and fills the need without waiting for thanks.

“I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver.”

–Maya Angelou

Well, it’s over. Another Christmas has come and gone, and along with it the whirlwind of activities, events, and decorations that typify this special time of year. As I pack up the holiday trinkets, I can’t help but think that each year seems to pass by more swiftly. By this time next year, chances are slim that my children will even remember what their Christmas gifts were! But it is my hope that, somehow, they will remember what is truly important about the season and that we will live it all year long.

E. Paul Hovey said, “He who lives for himself will have small troubles; but they will seem to him great. He who lives for others will have great troubles; but they will seem to him small. That is the spirit called Christmas.” Losing ourselves in the spirit of service—in the spirit of generosity—is truly the key to happiness. And there are so many ways of being generous: with our time, with our money, with our talents, with our friendship, with our love.

Recently, I read a rather amazing article about a father and son that demonstrates true generosity. You may have heard of Dick and Rick Hoyt. Rick was brain damaged and unable to control his limbs. Dick and his wife, Judy, were told that he would be a vegetable for the rest of his life and should be institutionalized. They refused to do so, and when Rick was 11, they rigged him up with a computer that allowed him to control the cursor with the side of his head. He started communicating. In High School, Rick typed out that he wanted to be a part of a charity race for a paralyzed classmate.

His father, who was over-weight and out-of-shape at the time, pushed his son in the five mile race. That day changed Rick’s life. “Dad,” he typed, “when we were running, it felt like I wasn’t disabled anymore!” After that, Dick became obsessed with giving Rick that feeling as often as he could. To make a long story short, Dick and Rick have completed 212 triathlons (can you imagine hauling a 110-pound person through grueling, 15-hour Ironman competitions?) and 25 marathons. They still compete in a race almost every weekend.

What an incredibly unselfish father. But you know what they say: What goes around comes

around. It turns out that two years ago Dick had a mild heart attack. One of his arteries was 95% clogged, and the doctors said that if he hadn’t been in such great shape, he probably would have died 15 years ago.

Parenting even a healthy child requires constant generosity in so many ways! As I struggle with my own selfish impulses, I am reminded of a long-ago trip to Israel. While there I was able to swim in two very different lakes: The Sea of Galilee (which is probably one of my very favorite places) and the Dead Sea. The two experiences were extremely different from each other. Bruce Barton captured the differences quite eloquently in the following passage:

“There are two seas in Palestine. One is fresh and fish are in it. Splashes of green adorn its banks. Trees spread their branches over it and spread their thirsty roots to sip its healing waters. The river Jordan makes this sea with sparkling water from the hill, so it laughs in the sunshine. Every kind of life is happier because it is there.

This river Jordan flows farther on south into another sea. Here are no splashing of fish, no fluttering leaf, no song of birds. Travelers choose another route when passing. The air hangs heavy above its waters, that neither man nor beast nor fowl will drink.

What makes this mighty difference in these neighboring seas? Not the soil in which they lie, nor the country roundabout. The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that flows into it, another flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure.

The other sea is shrewder, hoarding its income jealously. It will not be tempted into generous impulse. Every drop it gets it keeps. Receiving all and giving nothing—it is called “The Dead Sea.” The other sea gives and lives.

There are two seas in Palestine; and two kinds of people in the world.”

So at this time of year when we are making our New Year’s resolutions, let us all resolve to continue to give of ourselves. What Winston Churchill said is true, “You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give.”

–Kristin McQuivey
Lindon Resident

Help thy brother’s boat across the stream, and Lo! Thine own has reached the shore.
–Hindu Proverb

“NO ONE IS USELESS IN THIS WORLD WHO LIGHTENS THE BURDENS OF ANOTHER.”
–CHARLES DICKENS.

“There is no delight in owning anything unshared.” – Seneca

“Without the rich heart, wealth is an ugly beggar.”
–Ralph Waldo Emerson

Book List

The Happy Prince

by Oscar Wilde

Magical Hands

by Marjorie Barker

A Chair for My Mother

by Vera Williams

The Dog Who Had Kittens

by Pilly M. Robertus



Family Activities

****As a family,** make a plate of cookies for a neighbor that you don't know well.

****Look in the newspaper public service column** for opportunities to help others in need.

**** SWEET REWARD:** Set aside a large jar for marshmallows. When you see a family member be generous with their time or possessions, comment about the act, then add 1 large marshmallow to the jar. When you have 40 marshmallows, make Crispy Rice treats and enjoy the sweetness of generosity.

****On January 6, La Befana** is celebrated in Italy. Befana, a kindly witch, visits with toys for good children. Leave a small gift for someone "from Befana" and watch the results of your generosity.

Kid's Corner

Being dependable means being responsible, trustworthy, reliable or keeping your commitments and obligations. In other words, people can count on you!

When I was younger, I didn't feed my pets as often. I forgot and had to be reminded a lot or my parents did it for me. Now that I have learned, I think about how my pets feel without food or water. I care about them. I do things to help me remember to feed them each day.

Once I did my homework, but I didn't remember to put it in my backpack to take to school the next day. I left it on the table. My teacher had me do extra homework that night. I didn't like it. Now I try really hard to be dependable and get my work done every day AND remember where I put it!

Sometimes we have to do group projects. We all depend on each other to fulfill our responsibilities. I try to do my part so others can count on me.

Kevin

We, at Character Connection would like to focus on helping parents access character materials by using the web site located at www.lindoncharacterconnection.com. If you are interested in receiving a monthly reminder of the character traits and access to resource materials, please e-mail your address to arlainea@isquaredinc.com

Character Connection is a not-for-profit organization encouraging the enhancement of character development in our community. We are accepting financial support. If you can help please send contributions to:

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