

Giving to others is really in our nature

Mark Pavilons

?No one has ever become poor by giving.?

? Anne Frank

Most of us fully under



stand the concepts of giving, paying it forward and spontaneous acts of kindness.

We do so because, well, it's in our nature.

As compassionate human beings, we tend to ?err? on the side of helping others and giving of our time and money to those less fortunate.

One would think it would be the wealthy who donate the most in our society. The truth is, the middle class, dwindling as it is, tends to be the most generous group in our midst. Perhaps it's because those of modest means hold hope, generosity and goodwill very dear to their hearts. Perhaps they've learned some hard lessons in life, or picked up some positive messages from their parents. But you see, wealth is a relative term. In today's uncertain economic hurricanes, monetary wealth can be fleeting. Possessions are merely things ? assembled trinkets to stand as a testament to one's personal good fortune.

But seldom are vitally important things like happiness and success related to finances or career status.

Over the years, I have polled hundreds of readers and asked them their definitions of happiness and success.

Not surprisingly, the answers centred around family; mental contentment; being appreciated for one's talents and putting things in perspective. We learn by doing. And we learn more and more each day.

As different as the six billion people on earth are, we share one thing in common ??the pursuit of happiness.

Some people believe humans are inherently greedy or selfish. While we have to look out for ?number one??to an extent, I'd like to think we're quite the opposite.

How many of us would give up our lives to save a spouse, child or close friend? How many of us would risk our lives to save another? And would we not lend a hand to a perfect stranger, if it meant lightening their load?

I believe that giving is one of the things that separates our species from all others. Perhaps it's the only thing that differentiates humans from the rest of our yet-to-encounter galactic neighbours.

And, over the recent holiday season, who wasn't warm and fuzzy all over, embraced by the spirit of giving and sharing?

?Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more.?

? H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Giving to charity is another important part of our society, and local community. I?suppose there's always been a need, and government has never been able to be all things to all people. Democracy really doesn't consider a lot of motherhood matters and

shies away from socialistic or communistic philosophies on ensuring the needs of the public are met.

Charities exist for a reason. And it's our job to not only recognize the need in among our fellow men and women, but pitch in where and when we can.

I?can never pass a homeless person or street performer in Toronto without tossing them a coin or two.

Most parents donate to their children's school programs, campaigns and fundraisers. Some of us have a pet cause or charity and donate both time and money to helping others. Thank goodness for all of those dedicated service club members who form the foundation of our small towns.

But, it seems our generosity is waning.

Fewer Canadians are donating to registered charities, and they are giving less, according to a study ? Generosity in Canada and the United States: The 2013 Generosity Index ? released by the Fraser Institute.

There's been a downward trend in the proportion of Canadians donating to registered charities and the share of income they donate. The study revealed that 25.1% of Canadian tax filers claimed a charitable donation in 2005. That number dropped each subsequent year, bottoming out at 22.5 per cent in 2009, before rising slightly to 22.9 in 2011 (the most recent year of available data).

Canadians gave 0.81 per cent of their combined income to registered charities in 2006. Except for a slight rise in 2010, that percentage dropped every subsequent year to 0.64 per cent in 2011.

The institute observed that had Canadians maintained that 2011 rate, Canada's charities would have received an additional \$2.3 billion in private donations in 2011, for a potential total of \$11.1 billion.

Alberta ranks first with an average donation of \$2,321 while Quebec ranks last with \$655 as the average donation. The national average was \$1,519.

Canadians lag behind their American counterparts. In 2011, 26% per cent of American tax filers donated to charity compared to 22.9% of Canadians. Similarly, Americans gave a substantially higher percentage (1.33%) of their income to charity than Canadians (0.64%).

And we are thought to have the stronger economy.

I don't know if it's a sign of the times, or a trend in human nature.

Let's hope we never lose what makes us human.

?Giving is true having.?

? Charles Spurgeon