Volunteer, Now, and Often

I recently attended the Golden Heart Volunteer Celebration for the first time. Stone Harbor Conference Center was filled to capacity with the nominees, those that named them, many volunteers of many organizations, and some of the agencies that benefit from these wonderful individuals who give of their time to Door County. As I looked over the list of nominees, I found myself connecting all these volunteers with civility. The evening’s theme was “Be a Shining Star”. Each of these volunteers was spreading civility all over our community by helping in some way to make life better for us all.

I truly believe that volunteering can help you to become more civil. It gives you the opportunity to use many of the civility tools that you have learned. First and foremost it is expanding your inclusiveness. You are entering someone else’s domain and are being asked to accept how it operates and do what is asked of you. One might say that you are allowing yourself to walk in another’s shoes. No other experience can be so eye opening. You will be so much more capable to see and understand the complexities of our world.

In order to do the job that you are asked to do, you need to pay close attention and listen carefully. You will be doing necessary tasks for the agency which allows the agency staff to direct their attention to their mission. You need to quickly grasp what is needed and then do it proficiently. This is done in an agreeable manner. While there are more than one way to do a task. You need to do as you are asked to do. Often that may lead you to increase your task list and further help.

Still you are in a way a guest and showing respect for being at someone else’s space will make both of you feel comfortable with each other. Respect begets respect. Your time there will be thanked graciously and you will always be honored by all agency personnel. Confidentiality is crucial. At any time you may hear or see something that you should not have. You must remain silent.

Lastly, you have either asked or accepted the volunteer position. You need to be responsibility. Arrive on time, do your job, and leave when your time is done.

Just think of the power of repeating these behaviors. As a bridge player at each of the duplicate games that I play, I want to place. Consequently I play there as often as I can, I read the bridge journal every month, I talk to my partner about mistakes that we made and how to improve, I teach so I know how to bid, play, and defend. Others of you may golf, play tennis, draw, play and instrument, knit, work with wood, etc. You practice.

Do you realize that the entire community is being helped to be civil, simply by your example. Experiencing someone using civility tools has an emotion effect on the other person. They feel heard which goes to feeling. They feel that they count; their actions, their career choice, do make a difference. This uplifting they will carry with them as they go on in their day. No matter how long these good feelings last, hours, days, each of their interactions will model some of the tools that you demonstrated. Guess what? The next persons that they encounter will experience that same good will. Then the next time you return to your volunteer site, the same uplifting will occur. Civility is spreading.

Secondly, by your good works our community is easing someone’s problem, giving them some bit of peace. The Golden Heart Volunteer Celebration had 36 nominees in 6 categories. I was in awe at all these individuals had done. I further realized that these were a small number of volunteers that make up the volunteers in Door County. All of them were winners and I thank each one. All these good acts provide the atmosphere for a civil community.

A week later I attended the Door County Civility Project Celebration. We have been in existence for three years. We so fortunate to have Former LT. Governor Barbara Lawton speak. While she had much to say in a short period of time, one word I came away with was generosity. Each of us needs to come to people with an attitude of generosity. How fitting to volunteering.

Please volunteer now, often.

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Door County Civility Project