

Have You Picked Up Any Trash Lately?

Michael Yakawich
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On this early Sunday morning, I took my monthly stroll around my neighborhood. It was my trash day of sorts. Within a four block area I was able to gather about 4 garbage bags of trash. As I did this, it made me ponder, how to make a world better starts in our own “backyard”. Kids were riding their bikes this morning observing me. I asked them, “Do you like a dirty neighborhood or a clean one.” They unanimously responded, “Clean!” And one proceeded to help me pick up some trash around his house.

For anyone reading this, I would strongly assume you have a vision of building a better world. Whether we are religious or not, a common denominator is to have a nice neighborhood and a better world for us and our children to live in. It is in that frame of mind, I ponder how much can we place our thoughts into action(s) and where to begin? Of course, one might say, “Mike, you are a City Councilman. You should not go around cleaning up garbage on a Sunday morning!” I must reply to myself that perhaps I benefit more from this task than others. Anyway, isn’t it right that a public servant should serve and not be served?



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I have found in leadership the two areas I need to work on more: (1) Self-pity and (2) humility. I have especially found that in volunteering within my community, I come to appreciate what I have or what I did not. In having more appreciation, I find less to pity about. When we delve into poverty, homelessness, drug and alcohol addictions, family breakdown and suicide issues, I am profoundly humbled. When many face such personal tragedies, it induces me ever more to see beyond my own issues and focus more on theirs.

Recently, I was awarded the 2014 ‘Outstanding Service Commendation’ by the local Elks Lodge #394. I never see that I do enough. We do not volunteer to be recognized. Yet, when recognized we hope it can inspire others to do the same. As a wise person said once, it is better to be recognized by others than by that close circle of people you associate with daily.



Let us look more into our neighborhood. There is the literal trash that we have around us and we need to pick it up. When we walk our neighborhood we discover a deeper reality of life than when we drive it. Whatever the socio-economics of our neighborhoods, we discover great needs. As we look deeper into our community, we are behooved to see and understand the issues pressing upon people. Whether it is in understanding how abuse of methamphetamine, prescription drugs or alcohol impacts your city or poverty and homelessness or suicide, all are crying out for good people to roll up your sleeves and help tackle them.

Certainly, we are not doing enough. I believe we have so much more potential to get involved and offer our own expertise, talents and insights. Granted, many are doing this already. Then, we need to keep doing and encouraging young and old to come on board and participate in this social action as well. Likewise, it too can encourage us to evaluate and pursue the next steps in our neighborhoods and city. Kingdom building is a term that inspires me to reach for the stars. It implores me to start from my own home and neighborhood and then expand out to other areas. Alas, if not me, who; if not now, when? Starting from a cleaner neighborhood, we can easily progress to a cleaner city, state and nation picking up one piece of trash at a time!