The Spirit of Giving

I just finished reading a brief biography of a figure probably familiar to many of you – Mahatma Gandhi, the civil rights activist from India. He pioneered the concepts of “protest and resistance without violence,” which inspired other notable figures such as America’s own Dr. Martin Luther King.

Among his many strongly held beliefs were the concepts of things like community service and volunteerism, which he held in the highest regard.

Gandhi wrote that service, giving back to the local community and taking care of one’s neighbors through fellowship and volunteerism are some of the greatest gifts any one individual can bestow upon another person.

How many of us have donated to things like the office “Angel Tree” during the holidays because we felt a little guilt about our own good fortune? Have you ever gone to the local homeless shelter around the holiday season out of a little sense of guilt because you felt blessed to have a warm place to sleep?

If we’re to glean anything from Gandhi’s teachings, he tells us this is absolutely the wrong way to go about the spirit of volunteering. In fact, he taught the greatest joy the spirit can feel is community service rendered from a sense of higher purpose, rather than trying to ease personal guilt or gain individual recognition.

We’re a part of a very special community. The community of America’s veterans is among the bravest and finest our country has ever produced. Giving back to our own community is one of the most honorable gifts we can give to our fellow veterans.

It’s in this spirit I encourage us all to remember the veterans who are less fortunate than we are. Consider becoming a DAV Transportation Network volunteer and give fellow
veterans, who for a variety of reasons can’t make it to their much needed VA medical appointments.

Perhaps you can organize or participate in a community veteran homeless stand down to help eradicate the tragedy of veteran homelessness in this country.

Maybe you can seek out the individual needs of local veterans in your own community. Little things like mowing an older veteran’s lawn, assisting with a grocery shopping trip or even giving a primary caregiver some well-deserved relief are all examples of things that fall under DAV’s Local Veterans Assistance Program (LVAP). You can find more LVAP resources on DAV’s website.

Many veterans are bedridden in VA medical centers. Have you considered giving a few moments of your time at the local VA hospital and visiting your fellow veteran?

A person’s most valuable commodity is their time and this simple gift you can offer your fellow veterans will, as Gandhi reminds us, give you your own sense of fulfillment while offering a priceless service to a member of our own small community of veterans.

Volunteerism is a precious and valuable service you can bestow upon people we already have a bond with that most other Americans can never begin to understand. For ideas on how you can give back to fellow veterans, visit the resources available in the volunteer section at www.dav.org.