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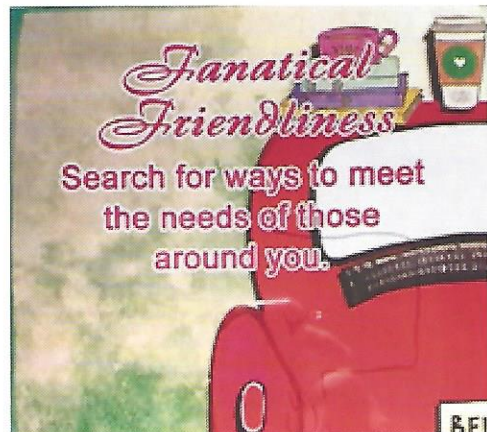
Practice fanatical friendliness

By Mike Crawford, CPA

When did the Golden Rule become more bronze? The basic human ideal of treating others as you would want to be treated appears to have lost much of its luster these days.

Since my retirement, I find myself with more unencumbered time on my hands and a compulsion to observe the conduct of others. As a volunteer for a cancer care environment, I do witness individuals performing endearing acts of kindness for others. However, I am troubled by a more discouraging trend in our society toward a selfish mindset among many. We've all seen the evidence of this disturbing new norm—mean-spirited social media posts often demonstrating a deep-seated intolerance for those who think differently, the ever-increasing impersonal nature of emails and texts, impatient and inconsiderate drivers on our streets and shoppers in our stores, as well as workers with bad attitudes consumed by their own problems rather than a focus on customer service or teamwork, just to name a few. It breaks my heart to see the direction we collectively seem to be moving toward our interpersonal relationships.

These discouraging thoughts weighed heavily on my mind one day when I was volunteering. During a break, I saw a sign that caught my attention. I took a quick picture of it so I wouldn't forget its simple message:



The sign's directive serves as a reminder that "fanatical friendliness" goes beyond doing periodic good deeds for others when we are asked to help. It requires us to seek opportunities to fulfill the needs of others, which also goes beyond treating others how we would want to be treated. So, in the spirit of promoting fanatical friendliness, here are four simple ways to cultivate a servant's heart and enrich the lives of those around you:

1. Embrace the power of one. All too often, it seems we avoid opportunities to take positive action to be helpful to others by making convenient excuses, such as "With everything I have going on, I don't have enough time or resources to get involved," or "My small effort won't make a real difference in the big scheme of things." However, it's important to remember that it doesn't always take a great deal of effort, time or resources to make a difference in someone's life. Whether it's giving directions to someone who is lost, helping someone carry heavy packages, offering money to someone in desperate need of financial assistance or helping a coworker meet a pressing deadline, there are endless opportunities to help meet the needs of others in small ways.

"Helping one person might not change the whole world, but it could change the world for one person." -Paul Shane Spear

2. Personalize communications. It seems our personal contact with each other has been reduced to a series of generic comments, shares, button clicks, emojis and endless abbreviations. We hardly talk to each other anymore because technology makes it increasingly easy to avoid it. It's as though the quantity of people with whom we connect is more important than the quality of the connection. While convenient, these connections are often impersonal and unfriendly.

Consider this simple example: Think about the many times on social media you wish someone a happy birthday or anniversary, congratulate them on an accomplishment or say thank you. When I receive such posts, they mean so much more to me when someone takes a moment to personalize it and writes, "Happy Birthday, Mike" or "Thank You, Mike." Let's get back to being friendlier with each other. Take time to learn the first names of people you run into often and always greet them by name, like your branch bank tellers, store checkout clerks, waiters and waitresses, mail carriers, hair salon staff and others.

"There are no strangers here. Only friends you haven't yet met." - William Butler Yeats

3. Show respect. When did compliance with laws, rules and social guidelines become purely optional? Let's take road safety as an example. I may not remember it correctly from driver's education, but I thought speed limits, undistracted driving, adequate distance between vehicles, use of blinkers and other driving

requirements applied to all of us on the road equally. Unfortunately, for many drivers, consideration for the safety of others has taken a back seat to their own needs. Each day is filled with opportunities to be more considerate of others, whether it's socially important matters—like being safer and more courteous on our streets or only smoking outdoors so others won't be subjected to secondhand smoke—or simple courtesies—like letting someone with only a few grocery items go ahead of you in the checkout line when you have a full cart or waiting for an elevator to empty first before trying to enter it.

"Consider the rights of others before your own feelings, and the feelings of others before your own rights." - John Wooden

4. Offer the benefit of the doubt. Why do we assume we know all the true facts on issues when we are posting comments on social media, discussing a controversial issue with another person or gossiping in a group? All too often we act as though we are privy to firsthand knowledge of all

the facts and circumstances, when in fact we may know very little about the issue or situation at hand. One of my favorite quotes about this is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates: "The only true wisdom is knowing you know nothing." We must be careful about judging others, because we don't really know what their life journey has been or is all about. Assume good intentions from others and don't rush to judge.

"Never look down on anybody unless you are helping them up." - Rev. Jesse Jackson

With all of the events that occur every day around us, wouldn't this world be so much nicer if we were all ambassadors of fanatical friendliness? Search for ways to make the lives of those around you better and see how much kinder the world will look to you.

"There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people." - George H. W. Bush

The advertisement features a large black alarm clock with a circular dial. The dial is a calendar for the year 2018, with the word "SOLD" written in red across the months of September, October, and November. To the right of the clock is a smartphone displaying a keypad interface for "Accounting Practice Sales". The APS logo is in the top left corner of the ad area.

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