

WHY I GIVE by Beverly Baker

People ask why I give. Well, I'm an addict. Some people drink, some people smoke, others gamble. I enjoy giving money away. Why? How did I become addicted?

My Mother grew up on a farm near Geneva. Some of you have heard the story before, and I apologize. My grandmother was widowed at 39 with five children and no skills. So she did what she had to do. She worked in the sauerkraut factory in season but basically took in laundry and baked. Her neighbors were perfectly capable of doing their own laundry and baking for themselves but let Carrie do it so they could help her support her children. That's how it was 120 years ago. People cared for and about others. And, regardless of what our national news may say, I believe we still are a nation of caring people. So, part of my **reason for giving is to pay back ...and also forward...**for all the blessings of my own life.

In case you're wondering, those five children all became productive citizens: one uncle was a farmer the other VP of the Market Basket food stores...the 1940 version of Wegman's. One aunt was a housewife, my mother a nurse and the other aunt became superintendent of schools in Yates County. Interestingly, she married the Sheriff... and they had to have been one of the first power couples in the entire United States!

I also learned by example. Although both my parents worked they were also active volunteers. And, my Father, ever the Boy Scout leader, practiced what he taught. If you were ill he treated you whether you could pay or not. He would leave the office at the end of the day with his day's earnings but often arrived home with less than he started out with as one (or more) less fortunate individuals would be enjoying a meal at George's Restaurant. **So another part of giving is helping others.**

I'm an only child. An only child does not share. However, there was never a question about GIVING. That's just what one does.

But, please remember giving isn't always about money. Officially, giving is of time, talent and resources. I'm sure everyone in this room is already giving of their time and talent...and most are sharing resources. If you haven't taken that last step yet, I would encourage you to do so. Remember, and I quote one of the people I admire most in the world, Dave Dunlop, 'it is not how much you give but that you DO give'.

Since I've never had a family of my own...especially children to care for...it's been fairly easy for me to support my addiction. And that's what has kept me working all these years. Now that I'm finally facing retirement, I also know it's going to be very hard to possibly not be able to do as much as I'd like to do.

There are so many needs in our community. We who have a warm home in which to live and food to eat and good friends who rally when we need help can't always understand what others face and have to deal with on a daily basis. Also, as individuals we don't usually have the means with which to make a big impact so another **reason for giving is to support organizations which can make that impact.**

So, give what you can to what you believe in and/or care about. And, the fact that you are here today hopefully means you support the Women's Fund!

For that we are very grateful.

