

12-25-09 Is Help on The Way?

Last Sunday morning I spoke to my grandchildren about the big snow storm. Haley and Joey had enjoyed the tiny a bit of snow a week earlier because it was the first. Four year old Colin, “waited for ten hours and did not see a single snow flake!” he informed me with much drama. When I asked him if it was true, what his mother told me about making cookies and delivering them to his neighbors, he acknowledged this with an, “Uh, huh”. I told him this was such a nice thing to do for neighbors, especially right before Christmas, and he said matter-of-factly, “I know.”

So, he waited for the snow storm with much anticipation, not understanding why it took so long to arrive, but helping neighbors, he was certain about that.

Other people besides the very young are filled with anticipation before snow storms but it is not with excitement and glee. Some people are filled with anxiety and fear while waiting for the snow because they live alone or they are homebound or frail or they are almost out of their medication or they wonder if they will even eat for a few days if snowed in. Some of the elderly, in particular, are worried, with good reason, when a storm hits because they cannot shovel, some cannot drive and some will not eat unless food is delivered.

Many of our senior citizens depend on their mid-day meal being delivered by volunteers of the “Meals on Wheels” program. The volunteers and the Councils on Aging try to make sure they always have some non-perishables on hand for these kinds of circumstances. Still, the homebound person looks forward to the warm food, the kind words and a brief social visit. It is an important program. Many emergencies have been discovered or averted because someone was able to stop by and check.

What if the drivers cannot make it to the door, though, because the driveway is not plowed?

What if, in response to the current reality check resulting in cutting municipal costs, highway departments cease to plow what used to be done, as a courtesy? Ask your local Council On Aging and the director will tell you about the phone ringing continuously prior to a storm with just such worries.

These worried well, as they are called in emergency preparedness lingo, are in every city, town and neighborhood. Every neighborhood also has their local unsung heroes who are already helping. I don’t live in a neighborhood, exactly. Where I live, the houses are set far off the road or just along the road, but when there’s a storm, my neighbor, Gary, is off to help the ladies in the woods whenever that help is needed. Not that they are damsels in distress by any means!

But isn't help always appreciated? And not all senior citizens need help. Why, I know a woman in Halifax who takes care of her husband suffering from the results of a stroke and still splits by hand her wood by hand. A lot of wood. She eats and even cooks with wood. While she is amazing, others do need. And help is appreciated. Right?

So, while you're out there with your plow, making that truly much-needed money, would you consider one more driveway? Just one? How about it? That could happen, right?

I am making an educated guess that I am not educated as to the details such a plan might entail. For instance, would you want your local COA or police station giving out your mother's address from a "needs assistance, lives alone" list? Probably not. That doesn't mean we can't think of a way to connect helpers with those needing help. Maybe you could call in, give your name and license number and be given an address. Maybe you could officially register with the COA. There's a way to make this happen on a large scale. I know it.

I also know that acts of kindness don't need a program. My grandson knows that. It's just the right thing to do.

Brother, (or sister) can you spare a plow or shovel?

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