

Inspiring Communities By Taylor Alberts

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” These words from Mother Teresa have resonated in my up bringing since I was a little girl. To be able to reach out in my community and help those in need, has allowed me to create small waves of hope for others in my community. A donation of time, assistance or funds has a lasting impact on someone’s life and can change a person’s position from need to hope. Being an active member in my church and its community outreach program, I have tried to be that stone that will impact my community for the better. When I was thirteen years old, I went on my first mission trip to Macon, Georgia. It was not until I participated in that mission trip did I realize how my involvement can inspire and change someone’s situation from hardship to optimism.

There are no words to describe how my heart felt when I reached my first jobsite. I was anxious, scared, and amazed at the adversity this community was facing. I was immediately humbled and thankful for the numerous gifts that have been bestowed upon me throughout my life.

As our group pulled up to the jobsite, we were immediately surprised by the homeowner’s three-year-old grandson. He was eager to join us and jump right in and paint the sides of the house. With his help, we accomplished our task within a day. As we packed up to leave, he said we were all his friends and that he wanted to be just like us, helping people like his “Gigi”. I was quickly overwhelmed by emotion because I never considered myself as a role model for someone to emulate. The idea that someone looking at me as the example to follow invigorated me with a passion to continue helping others and create as many ripples of change as possible. This simple comment had a lasting impact on my life and continues to drive me to become more involved in my community.

The following summer I eagerly waited in anticipation to return to Macon and resume my journey as a stone making waves of change for people in need. At my next job assignment, I was uplifted not by a person but by a story of faith. As our group arrived at the next house in need, the owner began to tell us the history and sentimental value of the house. The owner told us how the house was her mother’s childhood home and after her mother passed away she became the new tenant. When we completed the repairs, her face was full of tears of joy as she and her husband marveled over our work and the resurrection of her home. She said something in between sobs that I will never forget: “You always hear about teens at your age being arrested for drugs, criminal activity, and causing trouble, but you never hear about the young people like you who go out and take time out of your busy schedules to come and help out people like me. I am forever grateful and blessed for all of you.” When this woman said this to our group, a feeling of intense satisfaction began to overwhelm me. The idea that some simple chores could bring two people so much joy and happiness was astonishing to me. Over the next

five years, I returned to Macon each summer wondering if I would continue feeling that overwhelming satisfaction and each year I was rewarded with new experiences and a greater feeling of fulfillment.

Participating in the River of Life Mission trip and actively working within my community through the outreach programs at my church, I have learned that helping the community is humbling and rewarding. However, to inspire someone takes a little bit of faith, courage, and compassion. Spending time with someone, talking with them, learning their story, and letting them know that they are important is one of the greatest gifts a person can give. From my experiences, I have learned that when you give to someone in need, that person will do the same for someone else, causing a positive ripple effect throughout the community.

Inspiring our communities to become a better place does not have to be elaborate. A simple random act of kindness such as assisting an elderly neighbor, mowing a lawn for a disabled citizen, or donating food to a local shelter can be the simple gesture that causes you to experience that feeling of overwhelming satisfaction. As the book of Matthew states, “You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can’t be hidden.... In the same way, let your light shine before people so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is heaven”. We are the light of the world, so why not brighten up our glow and inspire our community to become a better place.

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