

## Helping Our Neighbors

Who can we help?

Like many of you, my wife and I have spent more time recently watching movies on Netflix. We recently saw our second film about the plight of Jewish families as the Nazis invaded neighboring European countries at the beginning of World War II. Jewish parents had to make horrible choices about sending their children away in order to have any chance of not being swept up into concentration camps. In one particular family, the father and the son were about to be separated forever. The father held his son very close, intently looked into his eyes, and told him he must always remain strong; he must never show fear and never forget who he is.

The boy successfully escaped from that immediate peril and spent the remainder of the war evading the Nazis by living in and out of the forests of his country. At various times he was hunted by dogs, shot at, captured, and escaped—all on his own.

The movie revealed some striking similarities between what the child experienced and what we see going on around us during this period of economic turmoil. People were kind and acted out of love and concern for that boy, even to the point of endangering their own lives and property. The movie portrays how Germans were relentless in hunting down these Jewish children. They would destroy the homes of anyone harboring them to the point of burning farms and killing the livestock. Despite such peril, the young man survived through his

incredible courage and strength. But he wouldn't have made it without the critically important generosity and compassion of total strangers.

In reflecting on this film, it occurred to me that we have a similar opportunity today. Throughout the country millions of families are unable to sustain themselves because they have been forced out of their jobs. Sadly, 60 percent of Americans have no savings to fall back on to sustain them in unexpected emergencies. Their hardships begin when the last dollar is spent. Although there is a lot of publicity about the billions of dollars being poured into SBA loans, the reality is that millions of people will not benefit from that money. Because this shutdown has been going on for more than thirty days they have exhausted their resources and are entirely dependent on the generosity of others.

I know many of you reading this have done what you can to help. Others would like to help but have no idea about how to proceed. You may live in a neighborhood or community where you don't see these hurting families. Believe me, they are there.

Here is an idea we had. We recently publicized on social media that we would give away \$100 Walmart gift coupons to ten people and asked followers to send us the names of people whom they knew were in need. We received almost sixty such nominations, meaning there are fifty extra families at risk for hunger, waiting for assistance.

Call almost any church in your community and ask how you can help them by

providing food or gift certificates. Our church is having a difficult time keeping up with the need just from the neighborhood surrounding it. When people come for assistance, the church tries to provide them with two weeks' worth of non-perishable staples. But they also need milk, eggs, bread, produce, and vegetables. For that the church gives out gift certificates to Publix for \$10 or \$20. It is really astonishing to see the number of people who continue to come forth seeking help to feed their children. They have no other place to turn.

We in the cycling community can be difference makers in the lives of those who urgently need it, when they need it most, which is now. We can fill their needs like the strangers who stepped up when the refugee boy in the movie was alone, hungry, and in danger. If you are not already contributing to this urgent task, I ask you to join us in this effort to help our neighbors.

*Jim Dodson is an experienced bicycle accident lawyer, cyclist and bicycle safety advocate who has been representing accident victims for over 25 years. Although his primary office is in Clearwater, he represents injury victims throughout Florida. He is the author of the [Florida Bicycle Accident Handbook](#) which answers the most commonly asked questions by injured cyclists. If you have questions about a Florida cycling accident this valuable resource is available to you absolutely free of charge at [www.jimdodsonlaw.com](http://www.jimdodsonlaw.com).*

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