



# Family Driven

## Family Support Services

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### Value of Volunteering

*...And each may other help, and service do,  
Drawing Love's bands more tight  
Service he ne'er shall rue  
While one and one make two,  
And two are one.  
In such case only doth man fully prove  
Fully as man can do,  
What power there is in Love  
Henry David Thoreau*

It is very much a part of human nature to help another person in need. We offer an elderly person our seat. We share an umbrella. We cut our neighbor's grass. We shovel snow for another neighbor. It is very natural to respond with kindness when another is in distress. When we can't help in person, we empathize with another's misfortune. Even though we can't change their plight, we want them to know that we understand their feelings.

We believe that the idea of responding to the needs of another person is a universal truism. History records the many religious orders whose mission was service to the needy. The proud heritage of missionaries like Mother Theresa give dignity to the dying and hopeless in India and Father Damien who gave care and comfort to the lepers in Hawaii.

When we learn that there have been societies that place no value on such sentiments, it comes as a surprise. The world of the ancient Greeks and Romans was a harsh existence. While we want to believe that there were among them some who extended a helping hand to those in need, as a culture helping the less fortunate was not the norm. In fact, a child born with any type of disability had no value to society. Since such a child served no useful purpose, it is heartrending to know that most were left to die. Thankfully, in the ages that followed the newer philosophy valued service.

Communities grew around the philosophy that cooperation held value. Successful farming communities rely on each other for their very survival. Because survival fosters interdependence and cooperation, farmers forge deep bonds. The Amish people have a tradition of a community barn raising where entire families come together to construct a barn.

Every year, well over 65 million people volunteer to help others in one way or another. Volunteering has a very personal and profound effect on the volunteer. One of those volunteers, Ray by name, has toted up many years of volunteer service to Special Olympics. Normally a reticent guy, ask him a question about Special Olympics and he waxes eloquent. Over the years he has thought about 'retiring' from volunteering but he just keeps going back. Despite the business of his own life, every year Ray devotes many hours to helping kids and adults have fun while developing physical fitness. Whether it's bowling, track and field or basketball, Ray is there to help. A beautiful skater himself, Ray is on the ice for the Gliding Stars winter sessions. Spend a few minutes in conversation with Ray and you sense his passion for the kids. Ray says it just "feels so good when one kid makes a basket". And that's what makes Ray "keep going back" to volunteering.

Antione de Saint-Exupery wrote a delightful little story about dependence and caring. The Little Prince says that when "eyes are blind, you have to look with the heart." Of all the roses in the garden, there is one special rose that Little Prince says is the "most important to him because he has cared for it".

*Joyce Krahe McDonnell*

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