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You Can't Take Anything With You, But You Can Leave Something Behind...What Will Your Legacy Be?

The New Year offers an opportunity to reflect on the difference you can make in the world this year.

In November, I sat awestruck watching a *Sixty Minutes* piece about families living in cars parked in lots where it was safe and there was an accessible bathroom. I was moved to action to call our family services organization (CAPTAIN, Clifton Park, NY) to find out what we could do to help others during the holiday season in addition to our giving gifts this year.

I was aware that while some children wanted the new iPhone 4S that talks to you for Christmas, other children wanted a bed to sleep in instead of a car. And that while commercials portrayed some women giving their husbands a Lexus with a pretty red bow on it, real life news stories portrayed other women giving their husbands a hug in the food pantry line they had to stand in since they lost their jobs and spent down their savings.

Is it wrong that some children got an expensive electronic device, or some husbands received a Lexus? No! It's a choice made by a loving family member to bestow bounty on their loved ones. I hope and expect that those who were able also chose to bestow bounty on those in need.

I would like to use this column to Move You to Action and show you

that every person can do something that will make a true and powerful difference in the world. If you are fortunate financially, maybe you can give more in a thoughtful and targeted way. If you have less money, even giving a dollar that will help someone else can soothe your soul. And, it's important to remember that everyone can volunteer.

The Power of Philanthropy

Do you feel somewhat powerless in the face of the horrific natural disasters, the overwhelming number of people losing jobs, and the daunting amount of need erupting everywhere that threatens the fabric of society?

Engaging in philanthropy is something you can do to fill you with positive power and control. If you are thinking to yourself, "I am not as wealthy as some of the people I read about in *Success Magazine*, what difference can I make?" understand this: Philanthropy is defined as "Goodwill to fellowmen; an active effort to promote human welfare."

You can become a philanthropist. Indeed, if you already give money or time to your favorite charitable organization, you ARE a philanthropist.

Engaging in philanthropy is something about which you have choice and total control—you choose where you will give and you choose

how you will make an impact. It is easy to do and the personal pay-off is great. Your actions can make an actual difference in the life of another person, and in the world.

In 1991 Doug Lawson, PhD wrote *Give to Live, How Giving Can Change Your Life*. In it he offers "startling new information about the measurable, proven benefits you can gain from giving. These benefits include longer life, a lower level of stress, a stronger immune system, a stronger heart...greater emotional well-being, enhanced ability to cope with daily problems, and a heightened appreciation of your own life." I encourage you to test out his thesis personally. He is quite clear, it is not about having or giving the most money, it is about giving what you can with a pure heart.

Think about using this new year to start the test—choose a cause you care about, get involved, give what you can ... become a philanthropist. Then, let me know and through *Success Magazine* (online) I will report back your results on the power of philanthropy. Together we can change Webster's definition of Success from "the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence" to include "and increased goodwill to all people."

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