Special Caring Awards Issue

International Caring Award Winner
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

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The Caring Imperative
By Val J. Halamandaris

This issue of CARING magazine celebrates the human spirit. Through the stories of the people profiled, it strives to promote positive values and underscore the importance of service to others in the belief that the solution to most problems lies in the love, understanding, and caring of one human being for another. We believe Albert Schweitzer was correct when he observed, “We are all so much together, and yet we are dying of loneliness.” With CARING, we seek to break down barriers between people and build bridges among them.

We strive to redefine wealth and success in America. We believe that both should find their meaning in service to humankind, instead of only in the accumulation of money and material things. We believe Albert Einstein also was correct when he said, “Only a life lived for others is worthwhile.” We emphasize the importance of hard work and seek to promote a positive work ethic in America. We believe there is no such thing as a menial job; each occupation in its own way is essential to society.

Through our interviews with men and women of achievement, we underscore the fact that one person can make a difference. In doing so, we provide positive role models for our nation’s youth. We search for genuine heroes, particularly among those who have overcome disability, pain, and suffering to serve others.

We strive to remember and celebrate those whose selfless contributions to society have been forgotten or gone unrecognized.

In CARING, we focus on the positive rather than the negative side of the news in the belief that there is a hunger among the citizens of this nation for such stories. We seek to promote the solidarity of the American family, which we perceive to be the bedrock of our society. It is an institution we believe to be presently threatened by dangerous influences.

We do our part to shatter myths about aging and the prejudices that keep the disabled from their full share of the American dream.

We believe that we must change from a materialistic society to a caring society, and that the words “caring people” are two of the most important ones in the English language.

We believe that “caring” is the very essence of the Golden Rule, the thread that connects all great religions of the world. It implies empathy, sensitivity, and placing the welfare of others before self. It involves community service and community cooperation.

We believe that the 21st century will be known as the “Era of Caring,” and that society’s adoption of this positive value will produce economic as well as sociological gains.

We believe that Luciano de Crescenzo put it well when he said, “We are each of us angels with only one wing. And we can only fly by embracing each other.” We invite our readers to join us on our flight into the future, and in our endeavor to build a better and more caring America.

Val J. Halamandaris is the founder and executive director of the Caring Institute and President of the National Association for Home Care & Hospice, and editor and publisher of CARING Magazine.
Mission and Goals
The Caring Institute has promoted the values of caring, integrity and public service since 1985. It was formed that year at the behest of Mother Teresa. Stirred by her example, the Institute has always held fast to an ideal: most problems can be solved if human beings truly care for one another. The Institute celebrates heroic people for their selfless service, especially to the dying, disabled, and disadvantaged. The dedication of these unselfish people to public service uplifts us all and ennobles the human race. The Institute is committed to spreading the caring credo: you can do well by doing good. To reinforce this standard, we continue to broadcast a message of social responsibility. It comes from our belief that one person, with the heart and will, can make a positive difference in the world.
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This year’s international winner is an expert on happiness and inner peace. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama shared his ocean of wisdom when he got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. In his acceptance speech at Oslo, he said he was a simple Buddhist monk who cared about all human beings, especially those in pain. “I believe all suffering is caused by ignorance,” he explained. “People inflict pain on others in the selfish pursuit of their happiness or satisfaction. Yet true happiness comes from a sense of inner peace and contentment, which in turn must be achieved through the cultivation of altruism, of love and compassion, and elimination of ignorance, selfishness, and greed.”

How do we nurture our better traits? By knowing that “we are all the same,” His Holiness would write in his book *The Compassionate Life*, a call to bridge the gaps that divide us. “We are at the dawn of an age,” he maintained, “in which many people feel that extreme political concepts should cease to dominate human affairs. We should use this opportunity to replace them with universal human and spiritual values and ensure that these values become the fiber of the global family that is emerging.” And this family grows faster because of the great Caring Award winners you’ll read about this month.

Some of them have crossed oceans to offer comfort and care. Bruce Charash builds global brotherhood by bringing medical supplies to hospitals in the developing world. Linda Smith rescues child prostitutes in India and Nepal by giving them new homes and hope. Reverend Bishop Jean Marie leads an order that helps the poor everywhere from Kosovo to Chicago and defends tolerance worldwide. He, too, knows that we’re all related, whatever our race, class, or creed.

And family members don’t forget each other even when they have moved on. Take Amy Palmer, a disabled vet who provides U.S. troops and their families with anything they might need, whether it’s money or moral support. Wynona Ward takes the same broad approach in her war on domestic abuse. Once a victim herself, she now reaches out to her sisters in pain on the back roads of rural Vermont.

Ward travelled a long road from poverty to success, and so did Colin Powell, the son of immigrant parents who became U.S. secretary of state. He tells NAHC President Val J. Halamanaris the keys to his success, including mentors and role models like the ones he provides for disadvantaged kids. And there can be no better role models than our young adult honorees: Kendall Ciesmier, Neha Gupta, Kylie Kuhns, and Alec Urbach, along with Rujul Zaparde and Kevin Petrovic. Though still in their teens, most of them are already world citizens who give education, medical care, clean water, and more to people in South America, Africa, and Asia.

Read about these leaders of tomorrow. Then learn more about one of today’s great leaders when Val Halamanaris interviews former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle. Senator Daschle has put empathy into action in a long public career, and he now lobbies for caring as co-chair of the Caring Institute, along with Senator Bob Dole. Both of them recently joined Halamanaris at the U.S. Capitol to present the Dalai Lama with a Mother Teresa International Caring Award.

It has been many years since His Holiness stood before the audience in Oslo, but he’s still the soul of selfless compassion. That day on Capitol Hill, he spoke about his visit to Mother Teresa’s center in Calcutta and praised the patient, tender care her sisters give to the handicapped, young, and infirm. “Mother Teresa and her followers are a clear example,” he said, “that all major religions have the same point of view and that they all bring inner peace by urging us to help humanity in need.” Serving our suffering brothers and sisters, as His Holiness knows, is the best way to find the happiness we seek.

**About the Author:** Lisa Yarkony, PhD, is the managing editor of CARING Magazine who volunteered her talents to bring these stories to life.
**Adults Award Winners:**

**Bruce Charash**  
Bruce is turning medical surplus into survival. He has collected unused supplies from over 120 hospitals and sent them to medical centers throughout the developing world. His efforts have helped over two million people and also passed on the message that the U.S. is a caring nation that really does reach out. ........................ 10

**Reverend Bishop Jean Marie**  
Bishop Jean Marie leads his nuns and priests in a worldwide mission to serve the poorest of the poor, regardless of race, gender, or creed. His order, Fraternité Notre Dame, shows the true spirit of brotherhood by operating soup kitchens and hospitals, helping disaster and war victims, and advancing religious tolerance for all.................. 14

**Amy Palmer**  
Amy leads a campaign to help military families in need. She has raised $92 million to provide them with everything from emergency home repairs to transitional services across the country. With 30 chapters nationwide, her organization has raised awareness of the problems faced by wounded warriors and the families they leave behind.................... 18

**Honorable Linda Smith**  
Linda heads a crusade to end sex trafficking in children and help its victims build new lives. She brings hope to girls in the third world by giving them a safe home, life skills, and an education. Hitting closer to home, she has released a report showing how widespread the problem is throughout the United States........................................ 22

**Wynona Ward**  
Wynona is a road warrior in the fight against domestic abuse. Every year she drives thousands of miles through rural Vermont to give free legal advice to low-income women and children. Thanks to her efforts, over 10,000 victims of domestic violence have the legal and social services they need. ............... 26

**His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama**  
The Dalai Lama has lived up to his name, Buddha of Compassion, since the Chinese invaded Tibet and he became the country’s head of state. Following a Tibetan revolt against Chinese rule, he established a government in exile, dedicated to work for the freedom of Tibet. Since then he has travelled the world speaking out for tolerance, freedom, and peace................................. 40

**International Winner**
Young Adult Award Winners:

**Kendall Ciesmier**
Age 19
Kendall has improved life for 7,000 people in Africa by inspiring over 7,000 kids to raise nearly a million dollars. She has built orphan care centers, distributed 50,000 bikes, provided school uniforms and more because she agrees with former President Bill Clinton that each of us can help change the world. ..........................35

**Rujul Zaparde and Kevin Petrovic**
Age 18
Rujul and Kevin are changing lives well by well for the many people who don’t have clean water to drink. Rujul saw how hard it was for them on a family trip to India and enlisted Kevin in tackling their plight. Together they have helped over 80,000 people by building 47 wells. ...............39

**Neha Gupta**
Age 16
Neha has empowered underprivileged children by giving them the education, training, and medical care they need to thrive. She began by helping Indian orphans she met a family trip. Then she went on to fund vocational training, computer labs, and libraries that serve students in both India and the U.S.........................36

**Alec Urbach**
Age 17
Alec films, produces, and distributes educational videos to show third-world children the fundamentals of science and good health. His videos, along with some basic medical and dental supplies, have reached 240,000 disenfranchised children in Togo, Botswana, and Ghana, where he has provided the curriculum for the nation’s first science elementary school.............38

**Kylie Kuhns**
Age 15
Kylie has raised $175,000 to keep her big sister’s dream alive. Kelsey Kuhns always longed to help other kids even though she was fighting cancer. Kelsey is gone now, but Kylie still comforts young cancer patients by giving them therapy toys, snacks, blankets, and a Teddies to Go kit for making their own furry friends. ..........................37

Tribute to Extraordinary Caring People

**Hon. Tom Daschle**
Hon. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle personifies caring. He is admired by members of both political parties, by conservatives as well as liberals. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives where he became one of the Democrats’ leaders. He also served in the Senate where his colleagues elected him majority leader, making him one of America’s three most powerful people. His constant thought is for America’s well-being, so two years ago he joined Senator Bob Dole as co-chairman of the Caring Institute board of trustees. Recently, the senator took time to share his thoughts and advice in an interview with longtime friend Val J. Halamandaris................................. 44

**A Conversation with 2009 Caring Award Winner General Colin Powell**
General Colin Powell, a past Caring Award winner overcame his humble beginnings to become a general in the U.S. Army, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and secretary of state. Having served U.S. presidents from both parties the general retired to give back and help found America’s Promise, which is run by his wife Alma. He has raised more than $295 million, enabling over 10 million young people to live their dreams. In this interview, the General joins his friend Val J. Halamandaris to talk about a wide range of issues including leadership, Lincoln, and love. ................................. 54
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The 24th Annual Caring Awards

This year marks the 27th anniversary of the birth of the Caring Institute, as inspired by Mother Teresa. It also marks the 24th Annual Caring Awards Ceremony, where the Caring Institute Board of Trustees chose to honor six extraordinary adults and six exceptional youth. On October 24, 2012 they received their awards and were inducted into the Caring Hall of Fame, located three blocks east of the U.S. Capitol in what was the first Washington, DC, home of the great civil rights leader Frederick Douglass. In addition to honoring persons who are large of spirit, the Caring Awards are meant to increase public awareness and support for their charitable endeavors. The Institute hopes that the honorees will be seen as stellar role models to be emulated by others all across the world.
Dr. Bruce Charash has been on a lifelong journey to help other people. One critical leg of the trip had brought him to a hospital in Benin, along with a 40-foot container of medical supplies, collected and shipped by his nonprofit foundation, Doc to Dock. “As I was waiting for the container to come from the harbor,” he recalls, “I walked onto the pediatric floor and there was a young boy, four or five years old, dying of malaria with his mother at his side. The hospital had the intravenous medicine that would save his life, and the hospital was not giving it to him because they did not have the plastic IV line to deliver it. When the container arrived in a truck, we immediately searched for the boxes of intravenous lines. We found one. We put it in his arm, and he lived. We saw him get the medicine, and we saw him leave the hospital” — thanks to a simple IV line that would have ended up in a landfill.

Charash had seen how much waste there is in U.S. hospitals during a long career as a cardiologist in New York. It was also where he began to see he had a duty to serve. “I ran an intensive care unit at Lennox Hill Hospital for 15 years, and I would always sit with the families in the intensive care unit and discuss what was going on,” Charash says. “I wanted them to know not only what tests were happening. I also wanted them to understand the physiology of the heart, as well as the meaning of the tests.” He did it because of his great passion to fight people’s fear of the unknown. “That steered my approach to medical education,” Charash says. “Too often we tell people things they don’t understand, and they don’t challenge it or want to express their lack of awareness. So I found the greatest passion in my personal life was the knowledge that I could bring a message to people in their time of greatest need.”

Now he’s bringing a message to the country that we can turn garbage into a godsend. Every day, 7,000 tons of unused medical supplies are disposed of in the United States. “Because of our government regulations, anything opened in an operating room must be thrown out even if it’s individually wrapped and sterile,” Charash says. “We throw out sterile syringes and sterile gauze and sterile examining gloves. These are all disposables, even down to a tongue depressor which doesn’t have to be sterile. Then we throw out capital equipment: beds, wheelchairs, stretchers, sonogram machines, cardiac monitors, and neonatal incubators. We throw out the capital equipment most frequently not because it’s at the end of its life but because we want the new model. So I felt it was immoral that we would discard things while people are suffering or dying for lack of those exact same things.”

Charash had long been mulling over the waste, when he received an invitation to the first Clinton Global Initiative in 2005. The high-profile gathering brought together charity leaders and CEOs, political stars and private industry magnates to discuss problems in the developing world. “It’s possible that year I was the only person who wasn’t a celebrity,” Charash laughs. “They were asking us to do something to make an impact on the world, and until then my only developing world experience was spring break in 1975.” Yet he found himself stirred by Mr. Clinton’s challenge to commit to action. “I was impressed by what I heard,” Charash says, “and for the first time, I began to think about the developing world beyond the nihilism that is easy to have. It’s easy when you hear so many sad stories about people around the world to think, ‘The problems are so large, what’s the point of doing anything?’”

But you can chip away at the biggest problems, as he came to believe at the meeting that day. “The challenge was for me to make a difference, and I decided to take that challenge,” Charash recalls. “I told the Clinton Global Initiative that I would like to look at medical supplies in the developing world. Part of the reason why I looked at medical supplies was I was
aware there was a substantial lack of capacity. I was also aware as a clinical practitioner that we were wasting supplies. So I thought the best way to make a difference was to match our surplus to the needs of the developing world. In fact, the model for our NGO is converting surplus into survival. What I did not know in 2005 was how big the surplus was. So I went on a national tour of medical centers. I interviewed people in hospitals, and I did research.”

A number of factors drove Charash as he put his plan in action. “I started Doc to Dock because I felt a sense of compassion for the developing world,” he says, “and part of my motivation was to prove I could do it. I also think I wanted to fulfill the commitment I made at the meeting where I was called upon as a citizen to make a difference, not just stay at home and watch TV and hear about problems. But I think the real transformation came when I went to Africa on my first trip, which was to Benin,” where he met the boy who was dying for lack of an IV. “The fact that this young boy would have died if it weren’t for that one piece of plastic crystallized the meaning of what I’m doing,” Charash says. “I realized this is about the survival of people. At this point my sense of commitment is driven not just by this one young boy, but by the thousands I’ve met since then.”

In the past five years, he has given life-saving help to over two million people with aid from six full-time employees, two or three part-time employees and several hundred volunteers, who collect supplies from over 120 hospitals and medical centers. “Our mission is to pick up these bins and sort through them with the volunteers. We use volunteers without medical training. We’ve even had developmentally delayed adults come by.” They all sort and catalogue the donations. Then pre-selected medical centers in developing countries choose and order the supplies they need, and the items are sent to them in special containers, each with over half a million dollars of supplies. So far they’ve shipped to Ghana, Benin, Liberia and Nigeria. They’ve sent containers to Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Lesotho, and Haiti.

Some of the supplies have come from individual donors in the United States. Families of elderly patients who brought hospital beds to use at home donate them when they are no longer need. “I got a memo from the ambassador from Zambia saying his nation was looking for a dental X-ray machine, which is an obscure item,” Charash says. “Literally the next day I received a call from a dentist who told me he had an old
but working X-ray machine that he was looking to get rid of.” Then there was the elderly man who contacted Charash and told him he had been getting the wrong diabetes medicine, along with his proper prescription, sent to him for years. He had never thrown the medicine out. “There were boxes and boxes in his living room,” Charash recalls, “and he had tears in his eyes when he handed them to me.”

Charash hopes to reach more Americans like this because he plans to increase the reach of his program. “Our goal would be to get more Americans involved in our effort to volunteer,” he says. “Volunteerism is fun and we make the warehouse a community effort. Again no training is needed because we just show you what to do and people really find it gratifying. We’ve reached out to certain businesses, which have shown an interest in sending their staff on a given day for a charity day, so we’re tapping into that. Our goal is to expand the number of shipped containers and expand our program to another dozen countries.”

Doc to Dock also has a broader mission, as Charash explains. “I want the world to see us in a better light, to see we’re more than foreign policy, we’re more than a government. We’re a nation of communities and nonprofit organizations trying to help. Doc to Dock sends supplies to help enable the medical community in developing countries — supplies that are in really good shape. By doing this, we’re helping build diplomatic relations,” he says — and sending an important message. “In the developing world, the message we’re trying to deliver is the United States is a loving and caring nation that really does reach out and that governments may act as they do, and we can agree or disagree with our own government or their government — but community to community, that’s a special relationship. We want the people where we send our supplies to realize we’re not just doing this as an act of charity. It’s an act of brotherhood and sisterhood. We don’t consider them recipients of a charity, we consider them partners.”
“Ah, the sisters … the sisters of Notre Dame!” said NBC sports commentator Bud Collins. “What a joy to see them again in New York and know they’re as busy, kind and considerate, helpful and caring, cheery and determined in their mission as ever. These women are whirlwinds of mercy, a welcome and inspiring breeze wherever they go. They are the definition of goodness and godliness. If somebody asks me whether angels exist, I answer: Yes I’ve met them. They are the sisters of Fraternité Notre Dame, ministering to those in need — anyone in need of an angelic touch. When do they sleep? I have no idea because they’re at their good deeds at all hours. Maybe angels don’t need much sleep.” Or perhaps they have another secret?

The one to ask is their order’s founder, the Most Reverend Bishop Jean Marie, a native of southwestern France. For over 30 years, he has led his nuns and priests in serving the poorest of the poor regardless of class, race, gender or creed. The order has opened hospitals in Mongolia, and it sends humanitarian convoys to benefit war victims in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda. It has also run soup kitchens and weekly food pantries in Paris, Ulan Bator, Chicago, and New York since the bishop first got divine guidance to cure the world’s ills, “One can see that the world is sick,” he says, “and that we should help the world in some way by giving it an example of how to live. We have chosen to have our base in the United States because the U.S. has great religious freedom.”

You can see this tolerance at work in New York City, where people of all religions and races coexist in peace, and where Fraternité Notre Dame began its work. “We started by helping the poorest of the poor in New York,” Bishop Jean Marie says, “and Rudolph Giuliani helped us.” The former New York mayor also gave the bishop a big award for what he did — and still does — in East Harlem, a neighborhood plagued by drug abuse, illness, homelessness, and violent crime. It’s also a place where the bishop’s order does the Lord’s work by distributing tons of food each year. At the Mary of Nazareth soup kitchen, the sisters serve 300 nutritious hot lunches nearly every day of the week. On Fridays, they distribute pantry bags of food to 600 needy families. And every Monday and Wednesday, they bring hot meals to 200 homeless people and to 50 of the home-bound aged. All told, Fraternité Notre Dame serves meals to about 180,000 persons in New York and fills the pantries of 34,000 families in dire need.

It also puts the gospel in practice in San Francisco and Chicago, where the order opened its mother house 12 years back. And if you visit one of the numerous farmers’ markets in the city, you’ll probably see the bishop’s nuns selling French pastries to raise funds for the group. “We rely on donations,” the bishop explains, “but they are not enough to tackle great poverty so we have our friars and nuns work as well. For example, we have opened a bake shop in order to do good things.” Besides, he adds, “you can never run out of God’s love, and God provides through His providence all that we need. Every day is a miracle that continues to help us live and to help us do good for others,” based on the thought set out in Matthew 24: “Jesus says, ‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,’” the bishop recites “I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me in’ —this is a summary of our work.”

No person is a stranger to the Fraternité Notre Dame, so Bishop Jean Marie strongly opposes intolerance of any kind. A few years back, he wrote a statement to the UN Commission on Human Rights, about the shrinking of civil and political rights in Europe as new laws forbade external signs and
symbols of faith. “Considering its services to the most destitute members of society,” he wrote, “on the one hand, it is a joy and encouragement to notice that in favored and disfavored countries where Fraternité Notre Dame developed humanitarian services, it is able to work in a climate of peace and tolerance with various cultures and religions, in order to contribute to social and economic development; while on the other hand, it is painful and shameful to see that we are unable to blossom in our own country of France, where there is so much to be done for homeless populations, street children, the elderly, and prisoners.”

And why is this? “Simply because restrictive laws and compromise between state and church figures contain religious discriminations and persecutions toward religious minorities,” he wrote. “Indeed all should think the same way, otherwise you run the risk of seeing your freedom of opinion restricted, or you may be eliminated. This is no longer the bloody martyrdom or religious persecutions experienced in the first Christian centuries, but another form of it: a slow martyrdom with sufferings, calumnies, humiliations, and disinformation, slyly imposed, impeding any activity, and paralyzing all initiatives.”

Instead of putting people down, we should be lifting them up, the bishop fervently maintains. “One must always encourage people, not discourage them, and show them that you love them. And you must do it without discrimination as to class, gender, race, or religion because when you love God then you love your neighbor without distinction,” he says. But too many people have failed to know the happiness that comes from giving selfless love. “Nowadays, many people are lost,” the bishop says. “Often they are in darkness. They are in need of some light to be shown the way.” And what he’d like to tell them can be summed up in just one word: “service.” The bishop urges us all to follow Christ’s example by “serving at all times.”

For the young people of our country, he also has some special words of advice. “I would like to tell them that you have the happiness to live in a free nation, so do all you can to preserve this freedom. For this, you should look to your Founding Fathers. Look also to your parents, your grandparents, and all those who built America and you do the same,” he urged. “It’s also very good for children to become volunteers,” he went on to say, “so they know what service means and how
important it is to love others. It was really moving when we first came to America to see so many of the young and not so young volunteering. We do not see that so much in other countries.”

The bishop’s experience beyond U.S. shores has taught him vital lessons, some of them at great personal cost. “At times, I have been contradicted and misunderstood and even persecuted for my ideas,” he recalls. “I came to understand how important it is to be tolerant and accept others the way they are” — even if they don’t accept you. “Whatever is done to you, you should always forgive,” he says. “My heart and hands are always open to whoever has done me harm. Forgiveness comes naturally, and sometimes I say to the nuns and friars that I forgive before the wrongdoing is committed. That’s the best way.”

And it’s what some the bishop’s heroes did, including the late John Paul II. “He was for us an extraordinary example,” the bishop says. “He opened his heart to the misery of the world both in words and deeds, and he was an example of forgiveness as well.” So was Father Damien, a Belgian priest who ministered to lepers on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. “Despite conflicts he had with hierarchy, he kept up the good fight and even died among the lepers to whom he had given his life. He found himself alone suffering with leprosy,” the bishop says. Yet he struggled to keep helping the ill until the very end. So did Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician and author, known for his Pensées, or Thoughts. “When he was close to death,” the bishop says, “he heard there was a sick child outside his house, and he gave up his house so the child could be taken in. He went to live with the poor and mentally ill, and before dying he said that what he regretted most was that he could not help the poor more than he did.”

What explains such passion to help those that society has cast off? Pascal summed it up well when he wrote, “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows not.” It’s a matter of faith and the reason why the busy sisters of Notre Dame don’t seem to need much sleep. The nun’s secret is selfless love that conquers hatred and changes the world, the bishop explains: “We don’t tire because in all things we are doing God’s will, and God’s will is doing good around us by helping others.”
Eleven years ago, the World Trade Center burst into flames. The terrorists who struck the landmark twin towers also lit a spark in Amy Palmer when U.S. forces launched Operation Enduring Freedom. In 2002, the first wave of Marines went to Afghanistan and Palmer responded by waging her own campaign to keep the home fires burning. “As a disabled veteran, military spouse, and mother, I know firsthand the challenges facing military families,” Palmer says, “so I began organizing volunteers shortly after 9/11 to help provide critical assistance to the families of newly deployed service members.”

Operation Homefront began as Palmer led a small group of military families to support the families of those Marines. “It really wasn’t intended to develop into a nonprofit, but it grew very quickly and now we are a national organization.”

As chief operating officer, Palmer now oversees fundraising and all of the organization’s day-to-day operations. “Operation Homefront’s focus is on supporting families of deployed military and wounded warriors,” Palmer explains. “Our primary services are emergency services like paying for rent, mortgages, utilities, food, and all those sorts of basic needs. We also operate temporary housing facilities for wounded warriors and their families to help them make a smooth transition out of the service. We just finished a back-to-school drive so we could give military children backpacks with school supplies, and we are now in our toy drive. Our programs run the gamut from emergency home repairs to morale initiatives to transitional services across the country.”

All told, this has amounted to an impressive $92 million in programs to benefit military families. Palmer raised $40 million of it, and the rest reflects the efforts of volunteers, as she explains. “Because of its 30 state chapters serving 37 states with more than 4,500 volunteers, grassroots support has raised tremendous awareness of the organization throughout the military community and beyond. In addition, Operation Homefront connects thousands of military spouses through the online community Operation Homefront Online. This interaction has also raised awareness. National and state programs, special events, and fundraisers have drawn support from individual donors, businesses, and corporations, and also garnered the attention of local and national media. Collectively, these all work together to spread the news about the plight of military families and how Operation Homefront assists them.”

Many people are not aware of the financial issues these families face, Palmer says, especially the problems among returning injured troops. “The war has created a housing crisis for returning veterans. Wounded service members discharged from the military must leave base housing, often before they receive VA compensation. Those who are hospitalized may have a long recovery, then long-term physical rehabilitation. Their families may be stationed miles away and may not have the resources to move or places to stay when they get there. Still others return from combat physically healthy but with symptoms of PTSD. They may be too debilitated by their war experience to hold down a job, and thus they can’t work. For all these reasons and more, injured troops and their families can find themselves without an income and without housing or the means to pay for it.”

That almost happened to Specialist Austin Johnson and his family, Palmer recalls. “He was a patient at Brook Army Medical Center in San Antonio, and he was stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso. His family stayed behind in El Paso and commuted to see him on weekends. His wife Lisa was on one of those trips, and they had a car accident and it killed their four children. Now Austin is an amazing guy, and he had a brain injury and post-traumatic stress as well as other issues. But he was declared fit for duty and given an assignment in
another station. He knew his wife couldn’t bear the brunt of him being gone and deployed again, and he wasn’t really capable of that. He also knew he would be a problem for his fellow soldiers. So to avoid being transferred to another base, he agreed to take a humanitarian discharge but that entitled him to no benefits at all.”

Fortunately, Palmer’s group stepped in when Johnson was on his way to El Paso for his discharge. “Operation Homefront made some calls,” Palmer relates, “and we were able to get Austin on Med Hold status and reprocessed through the medical review board. He was found unfit for duty and did receive a medical retirement as a result. Had he taken that other discharge, where would he be now? Probably not in good shape, living with a family, homeless, who knows? He just wouldn’t be in the situation he is now and it was all just a matter of a day that made a difference.”

Johnson is home now, thanks to the efforts of Palmer’s group. So is Simon Heine, as Palmer is glad to recount. “Simon deployed to Iraq, leaving behind his wife, three children, and a handicapped sister. When he returned, he was suffering from severe post-traumatic stress disorder. The family cleared out of base housing and had no place to go. They contacted us for help and ended up driving down from El Paso and moving into a model unit before Operation Homefront Village (a transitional housing community) even opened. His family continued to stay at the village while Simon received in-patient treatment. When the family was reunited and ready to move on, we connected them with a financial counselor and a realtor. We’re also working with a city program that may be able to assist them with housing funds. When families are going through these crises and living on $800 or $900 a month, we can ease the strain.”

But how about the strain Palmer, herself, is under as she sees so much hardship and tries to fulfill so many needs? It turns out she has a couple of prayers that she often replays in her mind. One is the Serenity Prayer, which teaches us “to be able to do what we can and change things that we can and know when we can and can’t,” she says. The other is Footprints, a prayer that shows us God is always with us in times of need. “There are times that God carries you through situations,” Palmer believes, “and I’ve experienced that during the hard times of Operation Homefront when we were close to broke and going
out of business. I do think it’s important to be able to trust that things are happening for a reason and really embracing them because it does take some of the burden off me when I know there’s someone I can go to when I have a problem. I’ve got someone I can lean on.”

She also has wonderful volunteers she can depend on, many of them in their golden years. “Fortunately for us, we have a lot of older Americans who are involved in Operation Homefront,” she says. “We work with a lot of senior groups and one of the great things about that group of volunteers is that they have experience they can bring to the organization. They have so much knowledge of business and accounting and all sorts of things that they bring to nonprofits across the country. Our Nevada chapter president is a volunteer in his eighties, and it is amazing to me every time I see him at our conferences and events. He’s still working hard, and I think it keeps him young. Just getting up with a purpose and a plan for the day is really important when you’re a senior.”

It’s also important when you’re young, as Palmer has learned from her two children. “I’m fortunate,” she says, “that my kids are very involved in volunteer activities and my daughter loves to do Operation Homefront. I didn’t get my son involved at a young age because I didn’t see how he could help much,” Palmer recalls. But she’s come to change her point of view. “When my daughter came along, she started in Operation Homefront from an early age, and her interest in charity is so much greater than what I would have imagined. So one of the things I have learned is that it’s never too early to teach kids how to care for other people or give to other people,” especially as Palmer’s group prepares to help another wave of wounded warriors and the family members they love.

U.S. forces are supposed to be out of combat role in Afghanistan by 2015 and Operation Homefront is already making long-term plans to meet their needs. Palmer and her group are now asking questions like “Where will the needs be?” and “How will our mission need to change?” Palmer is looking to improve the services she gives because she’s never lost the spark she felt when those first Marines went off to fight for freedom in 2002. Palmer says she will do whatever it takes to help military families have a fresh start in a place they can call home. “To me, success is helping a family. If I can help one family tomorrow — that’s a successful day for me.”
“I’ve always been a crusader,” says Linda Smith. “That’s just been my nature since I was a little kid. I was going to change the world.” This can-do approach led her from a broken home to a seat in Congress representing Washington State. But her world changed in 1998 when she travelled to Mumbai, India, and visited one of the worst brothel districts in the world. A decade later, she would come before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs to talk about what she had witnessed in the hellholes of Mumbai. By then, she was longer a member of Congress. Instead she spoke as founder of Shared Hope International, an organization that fights sex trafficking and helps its victims build new lives. Among them was a girl whose foster brother had sold her into prostitution when she was just 14 and whose words Smith shared as she stood before the committee that day.

“Girls in the brothel suffer horribly,” Smith read out loud. “Many of us were locked in dungeons in utter darkness, unable to tell if it is day or night, unable to talk to anyone at all, our only point of contact — the men that use us. I was lucky because my brothel owner let us out on occasion after the point where she knew we could no longer have the will to run away. But one day I took the little money I had and I did run away. I fled to the train station and started a four-day journey to my home in Nepal. All during the long trip I dreamed and hoped my family would accept me, but it was not to be. In the Hindu culture, if a girl is out for even one night the village assumes the worst and will not accept her back. I was shunned and rejected and alone” — until she dialed a phone number that a visiting missionary had slipped her in the brothel. Soon the girl found a sense of family and a future at one of the homes Smith started after that trip to Mumbai.

After seeing the desperate plight of girls like this, Smith says she felt compelled to provide a response. “I quit politics,” she recalls, “started an organization and then asked the folks who had given to my political campaigns if they would help me. With their support we built two villages in the first 18 months. One was in India for the little girls I’d met, and one was in Nepal for girls who just wanted to go home from where they had been bought. Then God blessed me with 19 Villages of Hope around the world where I have given girls a safe home, spiritual renewal, education, and life skills,” she explains. Many of the girls who come there become permanent residents and mentor the new girls, “and they’re much better than me,” Smith admits. “They can understand what these little girls have been through after being sold night after night. They can say, ‘See me. God healed me and he brought me to wholeness. You can be healed like this.’”

This message makes an important impact on the girls because it comes from someone like them who has survived. In addition, they learn how to reclaim their lives with people who are skilled in working with prostituted children and can teach the girls to reach their potential. “When you start looking at the villages that Shared Hope has created and partnered with around the world, you’ll find they provide functional skills,” Smith explains. “There are bakeries, toilet paper factories, and day care centers, so everybody can get up during the day and do something. There is also training in computer skills; there’s managing the guest house in the village for visiting workers; there’s managing the food processes; and there’s accounting in the offices. They can get involved in these activities, and learn actual skills, depending on the gifts God has given them.”

Linda’s own personal gifts include a sense of faith that she got from her grandma and a talent for solving problems that she picked up from her resilient single mom. After Smith’s dad
abandoned the family, young Linda lived with her grandparents until she was about five. Her mother finally married again, and Linda grew up with five siblings in a home where there wasn’t enough to go around and bad things occurred. “I was molested as a little girl, and I had to work from the time I was 11,” Smith recalls. “Many times I would say something like ‘Mom, I don’t have this’ or ‘I can’t do this.’ When I did, she would simply look at me and say, ‘Linda Ann, you can do anything you put your mind to.’ Then she would follow up by saying ‘you can complain as long as you’re standing, moving forward, but if you’re just sitting there complaining, then just close your mouth and shut up.’ Now that sounds kind of rough, but the reality was that it made me an activist. It made me someone who does try to take things on.”

Smith has also drawn her resolve from the lesson she finds in Romans 8:28: “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Smith counts herself among them as she finds herself seeing the good within the young girls who she helps. “There is no greater lost soul than the little girl or woman called a prostitute,” Smith says. “She is stripped of the rights of the law in most countries, including America. She is stigmatized by the law, and those who would sell and use her, their names are changed. In America, a man selling her would be a pimp — not so bad. A man buying her would be called a john, and yet she would be called a prostitute. But God says girls like this are precious because he loves the least of the least,” and Smith does too. “I believe all the things that have happened to me,” she says, “have prepared me to love these girls, to help them, and to understand the fears they have of telling people what happened to them.”

So she has launched a crusade against child sex trafficking in the United States. In 2009, Shared Hope International produced an expansive report showing how widespread the problem was everywhere from Florida to Nevada, from the big cities to the rural sticks. According to the report, the average child prostitute in the U.S. is between the ages of 12 and 14. Many have run away from home and get lured into the sex trade by men who offer them shelter. These pimps use drugs, beatings, and threats to keep their little slaves under control. But despite these abuses, the children are too often identified as criminals, arrested, and put in jail or juvenile detention. The problem is too many states don’t have laws to protect children who are pushed into the sex trade, and to punish the men who buy or sell them, according to a 50-state report card that Shared Hope released last year.
What’s driving the market for underage girls? “This victimization is occurring,” Smith says, “because we’ve decided to tolerate a commercial sex industry that we pretend just involves adults but is consuming the innocence of our children. And we’re just going to have to buckle on our boots, somewhat like we have done in other social fights.” For Smith, this has meant using her legislative expertise to fight for stronger new laws “to give the girl justice and to bring justice to the men who would buy her.” She has also raised awareness of the issue by writing a short, shocking book, Renting Lacy. Smith apologizes for the vulgarity of her account but maintains that “only the harshness of the truth can wake the world to this horror.” It won’t be easy, Smith knows, because popular culture has made us lose our moral compass. “Billboards and commercials that would have been pornography now sell underwear,” she says, “and they’re becoming more graphic as we “look for more and more stimulus in our everyday lives.”

So Smith is fighting back by running her own ad campaign “Do you know Lacy?” to target the child sex trade and teach the public how to recognize it in the communities where they live. “I was scared, I was nervous, and I didn’t want to do it but I couldn’t come back without any money, and it was cold so I just wanted to hurry up and get it over with,” an anonymous girl said in a recent ad. Besides these eye-opening words, Smith’s campaign also includes traffic-stopping billboards to let people know this can happen to anyone, even the girl next door. “I believe that when you start getting into people’s heads,” she says, “that when you shop for sex you’re buying someone else’s daughter — that’s when it will really change.”
Wynona Ward

Wynona Ward has travelled a long road in search for justice. The truck driver-turned lawyer brings free legal help to victims of domestic abuse in rural Vermont because she knows just how they feel. “I grew up in poverty on a back road in rural Vermont. When the neighbors heard screaming coming from our home, they turned their heads and when my family heard screaming coming from the neighbor’s home, we turned our heads. Family violence was an accepted way of life. When my mother asked the minister for help, he reminded her that marriage was for better or worse, ‘til death do you part.’ The local doctor treated her black and blues and other injuries but didn’t ask her where they came from. If my mother had chosen to use the legal system, she would have been told that ‘a man’s home was his castle, we do not interfere there.’”

When Ward and her siblings tried to protect their mom, their dad would beat her brother and sexually abuse the girls. Traumatic as this must have been, Ward mainly remembers feeling bad for her mom. “It was more difficult to see that pain than to actually be the person who was receiving the pain,” she says. “It was so painful to watch my mom who meant life to me being abused that I realized I never want to see that again. I don’t want to see people being in pain and suffering. That’s one reason I started my organization, Have Justice Will Travel. The other reason is because I feel that people need to not only have access to the law but fair and just access so they can have their rights protected and not be taken advantage of.”

Unfortunately, too many battered women in Vermont lack legal protection as Ward observed while attending Vermont Law School in 1996. “As part of a project, I decided to look into the legal issues around domestic violence, so I read almost 200 affidavits that were written by women who had been abused in the same way that my mother had been over 40 years ago. I was pleased that there was such a thing as relief from abuse orders that could become protective orders. At the same time, I realized that a lot of women were still being abused, so I began looking at the reasons why. What I realized was many times they did not come back to court to finalize their order because they did not have transportation. The other thing I saw was that many times the abuser would have access to the funds so he could hire an attorney but the woman couldn’t. So women were trying to litigate for their safety and their children’s safety against experienced attorneys. I knew that something had to be done to help these women, and I realized we had to go to them” — and she does.

In 1998, after graduating from Vermont Law School, Ward won a grant to start Have Justice Will Travel, a law office on wheels. Every year, she and her five full-time attorneys travel thousands of miles on Vermont’s back roads to stop the generational cycle of abuse. With funding from grants and donations, her group provides free legal representation and transportation to and from court. Ward also works closely with victims’ advocacy groups to provide shelter, hot line information, clothing, and housing. In addition, Have Justice Will Travel offers free classes on healthy relationships, job and financial skills, and résumé writing. Since its beginning, Have Justice Will Travel has provided more than 10,000 people with this full package of services, Ward says. “The best measure of our effectiveness is that few women — only about 10 percent of the women served — have returned to their batterers or entered into other abusive relationships.”

Ward also knows what she’s achieved when she’s settled a woman’s case, sometimes after years of wrangling in court. “You are absolutely amazed,” she says, “at what you see when you first meet a woman and how downtrodden she is and then she gets away from the abuse, and it’s like watching a flower grow and blossom. She’s independent. She’s on her own.”
She may have gone back to school. She may be able to find a new job. She’s ready to be self-reliant. And what I see is these women want to come back and help others,” Ward says. That’s what she did after escaping from her abusive home.

Ward dropped out of college at age 18 to marry her junior high school sweetheart and help him start a trucking business across Canada and the U.S. But her past came back to haunt her when she was 40 years old. “I received a call from one of my sisters that my brother had sexually abused a child,” Ward recalls. “It was devastating to hear that so I came in off the road and volunteered as a victim advocate for that child to be sure she received the justice she deserved. It was at that point that I realized it was important to stop the generational cycle of abuse that had occurred in our family. I needed to become a lawyer,” Ward says. So she spent the last two years of her truck driving career earning her undergraduate degree, doing her schoolwork in the cab of the truck. She entered Vermont Law School when she was 44, which seems late to start a whole new life. Yet Ward has achieved a great deal in the 14 years since graduating from law school and she still has dreams for the future.

One of them is to spread her group to other states, and she knows she can achieve this dream though she is no longer young. “I just turned 60,” she says, “and I think society in the past has always seen 60 or 65 as the end of middle age and the beginning of old age, but I do not see it that way. I see it instead as the beginning of a new age. When you turn 60 or 65 in today’s world you’ve still got at least a couple of decades left with health the way it is today and medicine the way it is today. If all those thousands of people who are turning that age can now apply that wisdom and the experience they have had during those years, many problems, especially social problems, would get solved in this country. We need those people to continue working and using those experiences to mentor others and come up with new ideas to make a difference.”

Ward knows her own efforts have changed lives when she thinks back to her days as a legal intern and remembers one of the first clients she helped. “She was 55,” Ward recalls, “and had been separated from her husband for 50 years and she lived in the house and they were still married. He decided to file for divorce because he wanted to have part of the equity in the house that she had already paid off. He was a factory worker who had built up a retirement, and we ended up negotiating that divorce so she got the home and he got the retirement funds. And it was wonderful, after interviewing the woman, to find out they had divorced because the household was full of violence. When I left her house that day, I felt successful because I knew I had left her with a home where she could live happily for the next couple of decades.”

Ward’s mother also found happiness in her later years. “Then when she was 80 years ago,” Ward says, “she was diagnosed with cancer. At that point, she had been on her own for 12 years and was really enjoying life and being independent because my father had passed away. I assured her that ‘you will go in peace and you will have no pain.’ I made that promise to her, and I was able to do that by having hospice come in. She wanted to be able to die at home and she did. It was so important to her, and it was so comforting to me to know she was not in pain. It also taught me the greatest lesson of my life: you need to be able to help those who are suffering as much as you can.”

Ward remembers that lesson as she travels the back roads of rural Vermont bringing justice to those in need. When she reaches the end of her own road in life, she would like to be remembered for stopping her family’s generational cycle of abuse. “I want to know,” she says, “that my nieces and nephews, my great nieces and nephews, and my great great nieces and nephews can grow up knowing they are not going to be abused.” She also wishes the same for all young people to come. “I dream of a day,” she says, “when no child watches her mother being beaten by her father, when no child needs to cover her ears to block out the screams. If that could happen, the world would be a much more beautiful place.”
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DEAR FRIENDS:

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 24th Annual Caring Awards Ceremony. The idea to award and honor the most caring men, women and young people in America was inspired by Mother Teresa. She said there was a poverty of the spirit in the developed world that was far worse than the poverty of the body found in the third world. The antidote, she said, was to make the world a more caring place and to esteem people not just for their material successes, but also for the content of their characters.

The Caring Institute was created in response to Mother Teresa’s directive “to do something about this poverty of the spirit.” Our central goal is to seek out individuals who are large of soul and who use their lives for the betterment of others. In other words, they are preeminent examples of caring who inspire us all.

The Caring Awards serve to shine the light of public attention on these very special people with the goal of further aiding them in their work. The awardees are role models to whom we can look as positive examples of what individual people are capable of achieving through the power of caring.

For the past 20 years, the Caring Award winners have been inducted into the Caring Hall of Fame, located at 320 A Street NE, in what was the first Washington, DC, home of the great human rights activist Frederick Douglass. Even a cursory tour of this museum, or a review of our website, will show that all of the past winners have been truly extraordinary. This is especially true for the six adults and six young people whom we recognize today.

It is a privilege to know these remarkable individuals and to have the opportunity to honor them as they honor all of us by the quality of their lives lived in service to humanity.

Sincerely,

Val J. Halamandaris
Founder and Executive Director

“We are each of us angels with one wing. And we can only fly while embracing one another.”

— Luciano de Crescenzo

MISSION AND GOALS

The Caring Institute has promoted the values of caring, integrity and public service since 1985. It was formed that year at the behest of Mother Teresa. Stirred by her example, the Institute has always held fast to an ideal: most problems can be solved if human beings truly care for one another. The Institute celebrates heroic people for their selfless service, especially to the dying, disabled, and disadvantaged. The dedication of these unselfish people to public service uplifts us all and ennobles the human race. The Institute is committed to spreading the caring credo: you can do well by doing good. To reinforce this standard, we continue to broadcast a message of social responsibility. It comes from our belief that one person, with the heart and will, can and will make a positive difference in the world.

PROGRAMS

The Caring Institute’s programs inspire, encourage and reward acts of caring. College funds are awarded to young adult winners and internships are offered to public-service-minded youth. The Institute sponsors a Dream4Kids program that answers the wishes of terminally ill children.
Welcome and Introduction ................................................................. Val J. Halamandaris
Founder & Executive Director, Caring Institute

Opening Musical Performance ....................................................... Gulf Coast Children’s Choir
Everlasting Melody

Welcome and Video Presentation: Remembering Mother Teresa ............ The Honorable Tom Daschle
Co-Chairman of the Caring Institute

Presentation of Youth Awards ........................................................... Val J. Halamandaris
The Honorable Tom Daschle

2012 Youth Recipients ................................................................. Alec Urbach
Neha Gupta
Kylie Kuhns
Kendall Ciesemier
Rujul Zaparde
Kevin Petrovic

Presentation of Adult Recipients ..................................................... Val J. Halamandaris
The Honorable Tom Daschle
The Honorable Mel Levine
Chairman of the Board of Directors, Caring Institute

2012 Adult Recipients ................................................................. Bruce Charash
Most Reverend Bishop Jean Marie
Wynona Ward
Amy Palmer
Linda Smith

International Recipient ................................................................. Dalai Lama
The Honorable Tom Daschle
Video

Closing Musical Performance ....................................................... Gulf Coast Children’s Choir
Rejoice and Sing

Adjournment ......................................................................................... Val J. Halamandaris
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Kendall Ciesemier  
Founder Kids Caring 4 Kids

Kendall is happy to help struggling kids a continent away, though she has problems of her own. Born with a rare liver disease, she has always been able to count on her parents for love and care. But many kids aren’t so lucky, as she knew at age 11 when she watched an *Oprah* show about African children whose parents had AIDS. “I just couldn’t imagine having both of your parents sick while taking care of four brothers and sisters, all while living in poverty,” nineteen-year-old Kendall says. “I knew I needed to help.” And she did by using all the money she had to adopt a child through World Vision, a charity that sponsors poverty-stricken children worldwide.

Soon afterward, she spent the summer undergoing two liver transplants and working on a new way to help children in need. A friend of the family told her about a kid who was in the hospital for a long period of time, and instead of getting gifts like teddy bears, he asked for donations to a charity he liked. Kendall thought to herself, “How many teddy bears do you really need?” so she asked her family and friends to donate money to World Vision. By the end of the summer, she had raised over $15,000, enough to sponsor a whole community in Zambia during her hospital stay.

This success inspired her to start Kids Caring 4 Kids, she says. “What we do is go out and speak to groups to inspire them to care for others in need. We empower them with our ‘I care 2’ kits so they can go out and make their own Kids Caring 4 Kids fundraiser and build their own story. Any other kid can do this, and we are going to help them. It’s about getting kids to care about other kids, while at the same time raising money for needy kids in Africa. We hand pick the projects we want to give the money that we raise to, which is really cool.”

Even cooler is just how much she’s done. In the eight years since she began, Kendall’s nonprofit has improved the lives of nearly 7,000 Africans by inspiring over 7,000 kids to raise nearly a million dollars. She has helped build and operate orphan care centers in Kenya and South Africa; provided uniforms and school fees for Ethiopian children; distributed 50,000 bikes to Zambian kids; and supplied food, shelter, and education to child slaves rescued in Ghana.

But it’s not enough, she thought a few years ago when she got a fresh jolt of inspiration. Seeing pictures and reading stories about the dire conditions in Africa weren’t cutting it. She had to experience first hand what was going on, and she had that chance when her family visited South Africa and Zambia. After coming home she appeared on *Oprah* with Bill Clinton when he discussed his new book *Giving*. It’s about how each of us can find happiness by doing our share to change the world, and Kendall knew how true this is after seeing some of the projects that she’d funded.

“Change really can happen,” Kendall says. “It doesn’t take a whole lot for one kid to make a difference in another kid’s life.” And when that takes place, it spells success, as she defines it. “I really hate the word success,” she explains, “because the kind of success we are obsessed with is not what I value or what I know God values. Society’s definition of success is about fame, power, and wealth. God’s definition is about service, love and selflessness. If we all focused on loving others wherever we went, not just when it was convenient, our world would be a different and happier place.”
Neha Gupta
Founder Empower Orphans

The Gupta family has a tradition of giving gifts that 16-year-old Neha has embraced. "Many years ago, my grandparents who live in India began visiting an orphanage on family members' birthdays," Neha explains. "They would bring treats and gifts to the orphans and celebrate their birthdays there." Neha's parents also participated in this custom on yearly trips to the Bal Kunj Orphanage, located in their hometown of Yamuna Nagar. They took Neha on her first visit to the orphanage when she was nine, and the grimness of the orphans' lives hit her hard. "When I realized that there is no one in the world who really loves them," she recalls, "and they could not get a good education because they did not have any money to buy books, I felt very sad."

So she decided to help these children when she was nine. She started by selling her toys at a garage sale. Then she made and sold wine charms by going door to door in her community, participating in craft fairs, and involving family and friends. Sales of the whimsical decorations for wineglass stems allowed Neha to provide the orphans with a library, school supplies, and warm clothes for the region's chilly winters. Next, she began to help underprivileged kids at the Shree Geeta Bhawan Public School by sponsoring the education of 10 students, starting a sewing center in the school's vocational program, and arranging a four-day eye and dental clinic.

She has since increased the reach of her group, Empower Orphans. She now helps underprivileged kids in both India and Pennsylvania — 15,000 to date — and she gave up selling wine charms about a year ago. Her money now comes from corporations, like Bed, Bath and Beyond, Gap, and Crayola, as well as fundraisers, leading to $500,000 in cash, gifts, books and toys. Her most recent fundraiser was a basketball game at her school sponsored by the Philadelphia 76ers. She got 85 students to play, hundreds of people to buy raffle tickets and, 50 volunteers to help organize the event.

Doing fundraisers like this has enabled Neha to give a Philadelphia school a library and fund computer labs in three Indian schools. It has also empowered her by showing her what leadership really means. "Being a leader is about helping others thrive," she says. "It doesn’t mean you give out rules and everybody follows. Leadership is about listening to others and coming up with a medium between their ideas and yours. A leader has to be willing to hand their job over to other people because it's not all about you. It's about them, too. So I’m now teaching other students to run fundraisers for the organization. We try to get as many young people involved as we can because our aim is to have youth helping youth." Sometimes, her efforts also have a "domino effect" as she saw last year when she went to India and met one of the girls from the sewing center she had begun. "She was very happy we came," Neha recalls, "and told us that all the things she had made and sold allowed her parents to buy electricity. This made it possible for her brother to study at night for his electrician’s exam and pass. Now he has a job and can help the family even more."

But the benefits from Empower Orphans don’t just go to those it helps. Neha gets a lot back every year when she visits the orphans in Bal Kunj. "Absolutely nothing," she says, "compares to the fulfillment one receives in helping others. The smiles, hugs, and goodwill one gets are the best feelings you can experience." And they’re the gifts of love that she deserves for all she gives.
Kylie Kuhns
Founder Kelsey’s Dream

Kylie is keeping her big sister’s dream alive. Kelsey Kuhns always longed to help other kids though she was in the hospital fighting cancer. Her heart would break when she saw kids lying in bed with no parents by their side, and she would ask her mom for money to buy them teddy bears as gifts. “She was a very caring person,” Kylie says. “I was there through her battle with cancer, and I saw how she kept a smile and positive attitude no matter what.” Kelsey used to say “failure is not an option,” words Kylie kept in mind when Kelsey died at age 12. Since then, 15-year-old Kylie has embraced Kelsey’s dream of making life better for kids with cancer.

In six years, Kelsey’s Dream has raised $175,000, and it all began as a backyard apple boil to support Camp Dost, a summer camp for cancer patients. Kylie had gone there several times with Kelsey and she wanted to help when she learned the camp was in financial straits. Her grandfather suggested doing an apple boil, and when people heard what they were doing donations began pouring in. Since then that apple boil has grown into Kelsey’s Fall Festival, a yearly event that draws crowds in Mifflinburg, Pennsylvania, and gets substantial support from local business, too. “We have live music, food, games, and crafts,” Kylie says. “There’s something for everyone to enjoy, and since everything is donated, it’s all a profit for Kelsey’s Dream.”

Much of the money has gone to buy 4,000 chemo ducks, special play therapy animals that bring comfort to children undergoing cancer treatment. Kelsey’s Dream also funds an opening carnival for Camp Dost, purchases hundreds of T-shirts for campers and counselors, along with warm, fleecy blankets. Kylie’s foundation provides snacks at the Janet Weis Children’s Hospital in Danville, Pennsylvania, so patients would have something small to eat in between meals. There’s a blanket program which provides handmade blankets, hats, and scarves to children undergoing bone marrow transplants, and a Teddies to Go program that lets newly diagnosed cancer patients make their own furry friends. They’re all ways that Kylie comforts kids in need and shows how much she cares.

Fortunately, she doesn’t have to do it alone. “We have over 500 volunteers,” she says. “Kids in my area like volunteering,” she says. “It’s amazing to see how the community comes together. All ages are involved. All the sports teams are involved. Some of the kids knew Kelsey and want to volunteer on a personal level. Some want to help because of the cause. We put our information out there and they come to us.” She also has college interns who work summers for her foundation. “They help us prepare for our events,” Kylie says, “make a lot of phone calls, and write articles about what we’re doing. When I interview them, I look to see if they’re really passionate about what we’re doing.”

From watching her interns and volunteers, Kylie has learned how important it is not to doubt anyone at first. “I don’t expect much from some volunteers, but they step up to the plate and surprise me with their work. Some kids don’t seem to care about anyone, but they care about Kelsey’s Dream. I think it’s because we’ve given them that good feeling of having helped someone else,” and it certainly makes Kylie feel good, “That’s what my sister wanted for everyone — to feel good, to feel better,” Kylie says. “I believe she’s looking down at us and would be pleased at what we’ve achieved so far. It shows that even the largest thing can be accomplished with a little hard work and a dream. Anyone can do it.”
Where can you learn about proper oral hygiene from a floss container named the Flossinator and a talking toothbrush called Mrs. Bristles? By watching one of the educational animated videos that Alec makes to improve the health of needy children in developing nations. In 2009, he founded Giving from the Ground Up through which he produces, films, and distributes the videos, along with educational comic books, and basic medical and dental supplies. They’re all needed, as 17-year-old Alec found out at a benefit concert where he met the director of International Help of Missionaries and clergy members from villages of Ghana.

“When I asked them,” Alec recalls, “what was the biggest issue for them in Ghana and in that part of the world, they told me it was a lack of science education. I wanted to use my talents to help, but I wasn’t sure how my skills could benefit millions of disenfranchised kids. Then I remembered something that Elie Wiesel once said: ‘Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.’ The words of the great Holocaust survivor convinced Alec to use his voice as a storyteller and filmmaker to create videos and a science curriculum for third-world kids. “There is not enough money for full-time doctors and nurses in these areas,” Alec says, “so these educational films play a vital role in educating young children in engaging ways about health care fundamentals.”

And people seem to agree. His videos were such a hit in Ghana that his science curriculum was approved for use at Ghana’s first science elementary school, which opened in October last year. The students who go there make up a small part of the huge group that Alec has reached. “To date, I serve 240,000 children in Ghana, Botswana, and Togo. We will soon be expanding into Central and South America and expect to reach half a million children by 2014,” he predicts. And he should achieve this ambitious goal because his films and comic books make learning a blast. “Our educational tools,” he explains, “can reach every vulnerable child who has been turned away from education because of the literacy barrier or who has been pulled by peer pressure in directions other than the classroom.”

If a child loses hope, we all stand to lose, Alec maintains. “When children fall prey to poverty, illness, and disillusionment anywhere in the world, all of humanity crumbles. To see a disempowered child, without even the hope of experiencing the joy of education, is the saddest thing in the world and brings with it a lesson. As young leaders and world citizens, we cannot allow these children to feel isolated and exploited,” he says. “These children must be identified wherever they are in the world and challenged academically. They must be imbued with dignity and the confidence that a brighter future is only an education away.”

As Alec works to help them, he draws on two sources of energy and inspiration. One is his older brother Jourdan, a former Caring Award winner who has raised over five million dollars to fight children’s neurological disease. The other is the many letters he receives from children around the world, including one small girl who especially touched his heart. “Dear Alec,” she wrote, “I like science now with your fun videos. Please send more toothbrushes and toothpaste. We like the cherry mouthwash. Thank you, my friend,” signed Angela, one of the thousands of kids in Ghana who see mouthwash as a rare treat. Alec has captured their struggles in the documentaries he presents to get support for his cause among students in the U.S. “I want to educate and empower the disenfranchised children of the world,” Alec says. “I don’t want to be complacent.”
Rujul had a flash of insight when he saw that water equals life. Five years ago, he was on a family trip to India, where he saw women and girls walking several miles to the nearest well and trudging back to their villages with heavy jugs. “They had to do it every day, twice a day,” he says, and their case isn’t unique. In India alone, more than two million people don’t have clean water to drink, and many die each year from diarrhea. “It really hit me that just because they live 7,000 miles away from us, that’s not right,” 18-year-old Rujul says. “I knew then that I had to do something to get them water.” So when he came home to New Jersey, he talked to his friend and classmate Kevin. Together they founded Drinking Water for India.

He and Kevin researched wells and learned that the cheapest cost about $1,000. So for the next year, they raised funds by knocking on neighbors’ doors, holding bake sales and washing cars. By the time Rujul returned to India later that year, he had raised enough to pay for a brand new well in the central Indian village of Paras. He and his family hired workers who brought machinery to bore through the ground — down 250 feet — in the hope of striking water. Village elders chose the spot, and three hundred villagers watched for four hours as the drilling went on. The first glimpse of water made them so happy they lifted Rujul in the air. Afterward Rujul thought, “If it worked for one, why not more? I had already figured out what to do once, so I decided to keep going.”

And he didn’t have to go it alone. Rujul had Kevin’s ongoing support because his friend followed him to India after the first well was completed. “It was a shocking experience,” Kevin says. “It was really like another world, even as soon as I stepped out of the airport. When you have only lived in the United States, it is hard to imagine what rural India is like.” Now drop by drop, well by well, Rujul and Kevin are changing the lives of people across India. In the past five years, they have built 47 wells and helped over 80,000 villagers, including one woman Rujul remembers especially well.

He met her when he was visiting the village of Chikni to speak to the village elders about building them a well. She had spent a long day in the fields, but she was still curious about the young stranger. When he explained to her that Drinking Water for India was going to build a well in her village, she looked at him and scoffed. “Son, when I see it, I will believe it,” she said. “So many come here and go, but nothing ever happens,” she said without hope. But something did happen the next day because Rujul and Kevin built a well in Chikni. When the drill struck water, every villager cheered.

They considered the well a great gift, but Kevin and Rujul think water is a basic right and all deserve to have access to it. That’s what they say when they make presentations to teens here at home, Rujul explains. “As a student-led charity, we strongly believe that students can make a difference. By making them aware of the dire consequences of the worldwide water crisis, we hope to invigorate fellow students to make a difference, not only for those in rural India, but also for those in their own communities. We want to instill in students the value of helping those in need,” he says. “They just need to pick a cause, let that light bulb go off.”

Rujul Zaparde and Kevin Petrovic

Founders Drinking Water for India
The Dalai Lama:

Premier Advocate for Peace, Happiness and Human Rights

“I am an old man now,” the Dalai Lama wrote last year. “I was born in 1935 in a small village in northeastern Tibet. For reasons beyond my control I have lived most of my adult life as a stateless refugee in India, which has been my second home for 50 years. I often joke that I am India’s longest-staying guest. In common with other people my age, I have witnessed many of the dramatic events that have shaped the world we live in. Since the late 1960s, I have also traveled a great deal and have had the honor to meet people from many different backgrounds: not just presidents and prime ministers, king and queens, and leaders from all the world’s greatest traditions, but also a great number of people from ordinary life.” Many of them, whether rich or poor, have unmet needs, leading him to conclude that “something is seriously lacking in the way we humans are going about things. But what is it we lack?”

The Dalai Lama has explored that question for most of his extraordinary life. Though he describes himself as “a simple Buddhist monk,” his life has been far from simple. When he was two, monks discovered him and proclaimed him to be the reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama. That recognition brought a new name. Lhamo Thondup now became Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, meaning Holy Lord, Gentle Glory, Eloquent, Compassionate, Learned Defender of the Faith, Ocean of Wisdom. And the doting monks who brought him to live in a 1,000 room palace prepared him to fulfill his glorious fate by tutoring him in philosophy, medicine, and metaphysics.

To some extent, his childhood was lost, His Holiness recalls. “For two or three years, after they recognized me as the Dalai Lama of the nation, I was still with my parents, my younger brother, elder brother, and sister. Then when I was about five, I reached Lhasa and was separated from my mother.” His entrance into the capital of Tibet marked his ascension as the spiritual leader of his people. “I became the Dalai Lama not on a volunteer basis,” he recalls. “Whether I was willing or not, I had to study Buddhist philosophy like an ordinary monk student in these big monastic institutions. Eventually I realized I have a responsibility. Sometimes it is difficult, but where there is some big challenge, that is also truly an opportunity to serve more.”

That opportunity would come in 1950 when he became head of government in Tibet. He was only 15 and the Chinese had invaded his country and brutally put down a Tibetan civilian uprising. “It was a very, very difficult situation,” he recalls. “When people asked me to take responsibility, my reaction is I am one who wants to follow the Dalai Lama traditions, which was to be enthroned at age 18. Age 15 is too early. Then they again asked me. Chamdo (a mountainous region in eastern Tibet) had already been taken over by the Chinese. There was a good deal of anxiety. So I took responsibility. When the Communist Liberation Army reached Lhasa, my first act was to escape from Lhasa to the Indian border. So I think ‘bad omen or good omen?’ Almost my first act after I took responsibility is to escape from Lhasa!” he laughs.

The Dalai Lama is known for being one of the few world leaders you can crack a joke with, but his struggles and his achievements are hardly a joke. Since 1960, he has lived in Dharamasala, a town situated at the foothills of the Himalayas and home to 10,000 of his fellow countrymen. “It was there we decided on a representative government — the first step for democratization. Since then, as refugees, we go step by step toward full democratization,” he says. And as part of this progression, the Dalai Lama decided to retire from official duties last year. “I always tell people that religious and political
institutions should be separate,” he explains. “So while I’m telling people this, I myself continue with them combined. Hypocrisy!” he laughs. “So what I’m telling others I must implement myself.”

But this won’t mean an end to the tremendous force he exerts on behalf of human rights. The Dalai Lama is an inveterate traveller who has often visited the West to advance the Tibetan cause by making media and public appearances. He has written two memoirs, My Land and My People and Freedom and Exile, and several books dealing with religion and spirituality, including the recently published Beyond Religion. In Washington, DC, at the 1987 Congressional Human Rights Caucus, he proposed a plan calling for the designation of Tibet as a zone of peace and for an end to the massive transfer of ethnic Chinese into his country. In 1989, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, “first and foremost for his consistent resistance to the use of violence in his people’s struggles to regain their liberty,” said Egil Aarvik, chair of the Nobel Committee.

But His Holiness looked beyond Tibet when he came on stage. “I accept the award with profound gratitude on behalf of the oppressed everywhere and for all those who struggle for freedom and work for world peace,” the Dalai Lama said in his acceptance speech. “I accept it as a tribute to the man who founded the modern tradition of nonviolent action for change — Mahatma Gandhi — whose life taught and inspired me. And, of course, I accept it on behalf of the six million Tibetan people, my brave countrymen and women inside Tibet, who have suffered and continue to suffer so much.”

After seeking his guidance for so many years, they’re reluctant to see him give up power. “Emotionally, spiritually, still they look up to me,” he says. “After I announced my retirement, they requested that I should carry responsibilities as I have continuously. I declined. Then they asked if I would consider at least carrying a title, like a ceremonial sort of head.” But His Holiness doesn’t want to be a figurehead, as he explains. “So now I have handed over my political authority to an elected government. I feel happy. They carry full responsibility. I want to be just a pure spiritual leader. But in case my services are needed, I am still available.” And he doesn’t intend to change his long-term goals and routines.

Every morning the Dalai Lama prays for this to be a century of dialogue. “Peace will not come from thought or from Buddha,” he maintains. “Peace must be built by humans, through action. So that means, whenever we face problems — dialogue. That’s the only way. For that we need inner disarmament. So our work should make a little contribution to materialize a peaceful, compassionate world later this century. That’s my wish. It will not come immediately. But we have to make the effort. This moment, it looks only like an idea. But every corner must make the effort. Then there is possibility. Then if we fail in spite of that effort, no regret” — and he’s determined to give that effort all he has. “The rest of my life,” he says, “I am fully committed to these things: promotion of religious harmony, promotion of human values, and human happiness” — a subject he addressed in his bestselling book, The Art of Happiness.

His Holiness knows that possessions don’t equal happiness, as he once said in an interview with Oprah. “Even when a person has all life’s comforts — good food, good shelter, a companion — he or she can still become unhappy when encountering a tragic situation. Physical comfort cannot subdue mental suffering and if we look closely we can see that those who have many possessions are not necessarily happy. In fact, being wealthy even brings more anxiety. On the other hand, those who don’t have a life filled with luxury may have a home filled with compassion, based on their choice to be content and to practice self-discipline. Even when we have physical hardships, we can be very happy.” That’s because “mental happiness is more important than physical comfort,” he explains. “Physical comfort comes from the material. But material facilities cannot provide you with peace of mind.”

Instead, compassion toward others is the real key to peace of mind, he says, even when you yourself are suffering. “When a person is in a miserable situation, it is difficult to develop genuine compassion toward others,” he admits. “That’s why I find it difficult to say to poor people, ‘Please have compassion toward millionaires.’ That’s not easy. And yet even the rich have their own kind of suffering, anxiety, doubt, and fear. So, in many cases, wealthy people aren’t happy. And once those with material wealth encounter small difficulties, their amount of mental suffering is sometimes bigger than it is for those who have faced such difficulties every day.”

One path to happiness is through Buddhism, His Holiness suggests, because “the Buddhist is willing to sacrifice immediate comfort so that he or she can achieve lasting happiness.” He’s followed the Buddhist precepts all his life, yet he encourages others to remain in their own faiths. In fact, someone
can be a Christian, he maintains, and still practice Buddhism. “There are
techniques of Buddhism,” he says, “that anyone can adopt. And of course, there
are Christian monks and nuns who already use Buddhist methods in order to
develop their devotion, compassion, and ability to forgive.” Whatever your faith,
the true function of religion is to help us fulfill our purpose on earth, and that
purpose is “to help one another.”

If we all realized our purpose is to help others that would change the world,
and “understanding that begins with changing our attitude,” he says. “We
must realize that it is best to focus on our oneness, to reemphasize what is the same
about each of us, rather than dwell on what is different. Yes, there are differences
between us. But it doesn’t make sense to emphasize that because my future and
yours is connected with everyone else’s. So we have to take seriously our concern
for all of humanity. When we focus on our individuality, humanity inevitably
suffers. And once humanity suffers, each one of us will also suffer,” he warns.
“Whether we love humanity or not, we must realize that we are part of it. My
future depends entirely on the future of humanity and so I am compelled to take
care of humanity.”

What also drives us to be caring is “human values,” His Holiness says.
“When I look at birds and animals, their survival is without rules, without conditions, without organi-
zation. But mothers take good care of their offspring. That’s nature. In human beings, also, parents — particularly mothers
— and children have a special bond. Mother’s milk is a sign
of affection. We are created that way. The child’s survival is
entirely dependent on someone else’s affections. So, basically,
each individual’s survival or future depends on society. We
need these human values. I call these secular ethics, secular
beliefs. There’s no relationship with any particular religion.
Even without religion, even as nonbelievers, we have the
capacity to promote these things.”

After a lifetime of prayer, he now believes you don’t need religion to lead a happy, ethical life. “We are born free of reli-
gion, but we are not born free of the need for compassion,”

he says. “This is the spiritual principle from which all other
positive inner values emerge. We all appreciate in others the
inner qualities of kindness, patience, tolerance, forgiveness and
generosity, and in the same way, we are all adverse to displays
of greed, malice, hatred, and bigotry. So actively promoting the
positive inner qualities of the human heart that arise from our
core disposition toward compassion and learning to combat
our more destructive propensities will be appreciated by all.
And the first beneficiaries of such a strengthening of our inner
values will, no doubt, be ourselves.” By caring for others, we’ll
find what is often lacking in our lives. “Altruism is the best
source of happiness,” His Holiness says. “There is no doubt
about that.”
Senator Tom Daschle is an extraordinary human being by any standard. He is intelligent, hard working, honest, compassionate, and sincere. He successfully transcended his humble beginnings to become the Majority Leader of the US Senate, one of the most powerful people in the world. Since leaving the Senate, he has demonstrated his expertise in health care through the publication of his books: *Getting It Done: How Obama and Congress Finally Broke the Stalemate to Make Way for Health Care Reform* and *Critical: What We Can Do About the Health-Care Crisis*.

He now serves as a distinguished fellow at The Center for American Progress, a public policy research and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans through ideas and action. He is also a senior policy advisor to law firm of DLA Piper which represents the National Association for Home care & Hospice. Senator Daschle recently joined Senator Bob Dole as co-chair of the Caring Institute, where he promotes the values of caring, integrity, and public service.

Like Dole, Senator Daschle has achieved uncommon success, and this is by no means an accident of fate. It has been done with a great deal of energy, hard work, and an unselfish and relentless focus on improving the quality of life for others. His lifelong crusade involves bringing Americans economic opportunity, as well as social justice. Over the course of his career, he has emphasized education, security, and bringing health care to all Americans. He is a strong advocate of health care reform, including coverage for the uninsured and the creation of a comprehensive program of community-based long-term care.

Senator Daschle has been intimately involved in many decisions affecting our nation, and he is well respected overseas for his sense of justice and fair play. Having achieved all that he has, there seems to be no limit to what he will accomplish for the betterment of humanity in the years to come.

Senator Daschle is a native of Aberdeen, South Dakota, where he was born in 1947. He is the oldest of four boys who grew up in a working-class family. Although he has gone so far, he has never forgotten where he came from. He has a passionate desire to make it possible for all Americans, regardless of their station in life, to have the opportunity to succeed.

His father worked long hours as a bookkeeper, and his mother worked odd jobs to raise Senator Daschle and his three brothers. Attending local public schools, Senator Daschle recognized that education was the key to improving his own situation and making a significant difference in the lives of others.

Driven by an innate call to public service, Senator Daschle attended South Dakota University, where he received his BA in political science and became the first in his family to graduate from college. After college he served three years as an intelligence officer in the US Air Force Strategic Air Command from 1969 to 1972 and continued his service as a reservist from 1975 to 1978.

No person of destiny succeeds without personal heroes, bright burning stars who offer guiding light, and Tom Daschle is no exception. His early role models included Senator George McGovern, Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey (also born in South Dakota), and Congressman (former Senator) Claude D. Pepper from Florida.

He was particularly moved by the eloquence of Vice-President Humphrey, a man he considered one of his greatest mentors, when he said, “The moral test of good government is how it treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the aged; and those who
are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy, and the handicapped.” Tom Daschle has clearly adopted the Humphrey quote as a central guiding principle. It has been the compass that served him well, as he has deliberated the many difficult issues that challenge a US senator.

Senator Daschle began his political career as a legislative assistant to South Dakota Senator James Abourezk from 1973 to 1977. In the elections of 1976, Senator Daschle failed in his bid to represent South Dakota in the House of Representatives. However, he was successful in the following election and was elected to Congress in 1978.

As a member of Congress from 1979 to 1986, Senator Daschle served on the Democratic Policy and Steering Committee. This is the committee that determines the direction that the House Democratic Party will take on all issues. His driving concern, then as always, was how best to serve the greatest number of Americans, especially those who are old, ill, disabled, and disenfranchised.

His leadership abilities were recognized early in his House term. Many of his colleagues, including his mentor, Congressman Pepper, strongly encouraged him to run for higher office. In 1986 he ran and was elected to the US Senate in a hard-fought contest against incumbent Senator James Abdnor.

His achievement was celebrated by the Democratic Party, which rewarded him with a seat on the Senate Finance Committee, an unusual honor for a freshman. In 1988, the Senate Democratic leader named Daschle co-chair of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee. He was also appointed to the Senate Agricultural Committee, which is so important to South Dakota interests.

In 1992 and 1998, Daschle was re-elected to the Senate by overwhelming margins. In 1994, he was chosen by his colleagues to be the Democratic leader in the Senate. In May of 2001, he became the Senate majority leader when Senator Jim Jeffords decided to change his party affiliation, which tipped the balance and gave Democrats a 51 to 49 edge in the Senate. This was a singular achievement. In the history of the Senate, only Lyndon Johnson had served fewer years before being elected to lead his party.

A longtime supporter of home and community-based care, Senator Daschle backed numerous efforts to expand home care and hospice options for senior and disabled Americans and their families. He provided crucial leadership in efforts to ameliorate the unintended consequences of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 and led the fight to restore funding for the Medicare home health benefit. He long supported elimination of the additional 15 percent cut in home health funding, extending the 10 percent rural add on, and strongly opposed the imposition of copays on the home health benefit.

“Home health care is an essential service,” Daschle said at the time. “It is so important that people have the support they need to recover in their own homes. That is why I want to make sure that we pay home health agencies enough to deliver these services.”

Commenting on an upcoming effort in Congress to preserve and restore home care, Daschle added, “I am working with my colleagues to eliminate a looming 15 percent cut in home health payments scheduled to go into effect this October. We have worked tirelessly in the past to delay this cut, but now is the time to rescind it altogether.”

Senator Daschle led the effort to improve health care in rural areas. As a member of both the powerful Finance and Agriculture Committees, he was able to effectively represent rural Americans and add a level of certainty and security to their lives.

“Home health care services are especially important for seniors in rural areas across the country,” Daschle said. “In some areas of South Dakota, the nearest medical provider is hundreds of miles away. Seniors who need medical attention, but do not have the means to travel hours for routine appointments, depend on an effective home health care service. That is why I am working to extend the 10 percent increase in home health payments from March 2003 to the end of 2004.”

On other health care fronts, Daschle led a bipartisan effort to support meaningful, enforceable patient protections for millions of Americans under managed health care plans, authored several important bills to expand health services in rural areas, authored and passed legislation to protect seniors’ health security by regulating the sale and marketing of Medigap policies to guard against fraud, introduced legislation to prevent companies from canceling retiree health benefits without notice, and helped lead the fight against fetal alcohol syndrome.

Senator Daschle has understood well that the future of
Medicare will depend on how it is able to bring the miracles of new technology and medications to all Americans for the treatment of chronic illness, and that the home and community are the best settings to deliver on the promise of these new breakthroughs. So he led the fight in Congress to provide meaningful, affordable prescription drug coverage under Medicare.

He has long recognized that another gaping hole in Medicare is coverage for long-term home care. He worked closely with the late Congressman Claude Pepper, who came close to amending Medicare in 1988, on including a long-term home care benefit. As a consequence of his actions, US seniors increasingly looked to Senator Daschle as their number-one champion, much as they had looked to Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey and Congressman Claude Pepper.

On July 5, 2002, Senator Daschle made a home care visit in Mitchell, South Dakota, to observe first-hand the crisis in American home care. Organized by NAHC and NAHC member, Veronica J. Smith, executive director of the Avera Queen of Peace Home Health Agency, the visit touched him greatly. “I met a woman by the name of Margaret Brayer,” he recounted. “She recently lost her husband, and she lost her Medicaid eligibility at the same time because of changes in her Social Security income. She is receiving home health visits temporarily to help her recover from a recent hospital stay. She says that without home health service, her recovery would be more costly and force her to sacrifice taking some of the drugs she currently needs.”

Mrs. McBrayer told Senator Daschle that her prescription drugs cost her more than $600 a month, which just about equaled her total income from Social Security. She told Senator Daschle that she already made tough choices between food and medicine and could not afford additional health care costs.

The great historian Arnold Toynbee observed, “One can tell the greatness and the durability of every society by a common yardstick — by the manner in which they care for their children, their aged, and their infirm.” Senator Daschle has consistently used this yardstick in setting his priorities, and one of the foremost among them is improving health care in our nation.

“Health care is an intensely personal life-and-death issue: overhauling the system will have a profound effect on millions of individuals, every business that pays for benefits, and a giant sector of our economy,” Daschle wrote in his book, Critical. He expounded on a number of problems in the health care system, but noted that one of the most significant is its current orientation. “As a nation, we now spend most of our health care dollars on chronic care, but we still have a health care system that is geared toward providing acute care,” Daschle stated. And we as a nation must understand the problems, he added, if there’s to be any real solution.

Whatever our response, it must address the aging of America, Daschle firmly maintained: “More people are remaining active at an advanced age, but longer life expectancies almost certainly will increase the need for long-term care. Medicaid covers long-term care, but only for low-income families, and Medicare only pays for care that is connected to a hospital discharge. I believe that our health care system must cover these vital services, either through Medicare or by making long-term care coverage a requirement for FEHBP (Federal Employee Health Benefit Program) participation. Furthermore, we should promote home-based care, which most people prefer, instead of the institutional care that we emphasize now,” Daschle stressed.

By advancing humane reforms, like this, Daschle has ensured both America’s survival as a nation and our place in history.

In summary, Senator Daschle has provided important answers to the most pressing public policy issues of our time. His career has ascended like a rocket from the prairies of South Dakota to the pinnacle of world politics. He is one of the most admired and respected people in the US and indeed throughout the world.

Through it all, however, he remains exactly the same personable and down-to-earth person he has always been. He is as humble as the South Dakota farmland that he calls home, and yet is one of the most gifted of all Americans our nation has ever produced.
Val J. Halamandaris (VJH): Senator, I want to begin by thanking you for the gift of your time. It means a great deal that you would be willing to spend time with us. Our goal is to capture the elements of your intellectual compass in order to guide future generations and inspire them with your example. Let me begin by asking you what advice you give to young people when you speak to them at high school commencement ceremonies?

Senator Tom Daschle (TD): Well, my advice to young people is to recognize that they've been given a set of tools through education that if used right will last a lifetime. And those tools can be used to do so much good in the world today, but they should recognize that their education doesn't end with graduation from high school or college. The acquisition of new tools through more education and more learning and more curiosity is what life in part is all about, but to give back using those tools every day of one's life is, in my view, the best advice I can give any young person today.

VJH: Let me take you to the other end of the age spectrum. We have 78 million baby boomers who are reaching the age of 65 at the rate of 10,000 a day. This is on top of the 48 million who are on Medicare today. What advice would you give this growing senior generation?

TD: Well, first of all I would remind them what baseball great Satchel Paige said about age: How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were? I would urge them to recognize that everyone's age is in their heart. It's in their capacity to dream, and the more one dreams the less one regrets. As long as your dreams exceed your regrets there is an endless opportunity to do things in life regardless of how old you are.

VJH: Would you encourage seniors to look for opportunities to give back and use their lives to assist others?

TD: Well, I think it's so important for people to understand that the rent one pays in life is public service and giving back. We all owe a lot of rent for the life that we've had the opportunity to experience. So giving back is an important part of life. Democracy in part depends upon those who give back whether it's as a volunteer or in public service. So I think it's so critical. I tell audiences of all ages that when it comes to democracy you either have to fight for it or work at it. And if you have to work at it that involves all of us. Participation is one of the key foundations for a good democracy, and I would encourage those who have the time to commit to giving back.

VJH: Senator, we're very grateful for the fact that you've been
willing to be the co-chair of the Caring Institute, which was organized for the purpose of promoting the values of caring, integrity, and public service. You know that Mother Teresa directed us to do something about the poverty of spirit in the U.S., which she said was much worse than the poverty of the body seen in the Third World. She encouraged us to look for positive role models and to use the power of caring, which she said was the one-word summary of the golden rule that runs through all the great religions of the world. I am building up to asking for your definition of caring.

TD: I think caring is something that goes way beyond just empathy. Empathy is important, but it’s doing something about that empathy that really matters. What are we going to do about it? Words are easy. Words and expressions and dreams and hopes are important, but it’s what we put into action that matters. And caring is about putting empathy into action. It’s about giving back and committing to improving our communities and the world around us in ways that demonstrate empathy and also commit to action.

VJH: That is great. Senator, what is success? I believe you can measure success in many ways. What is your definition of success?

TD: I think you’re right. There are a lot of ways to measure it. I think success is such a personal thing and I like what Maya Angelou once said about success. She said that if you like yourself and like what you do and like how you do it then you’ve succeeded. I think there’s a lot of truth to that. You have to start with an appreciation of who you are and be comfortable in your own skin, but beyond that you’ve got to like what you do and how you do it.

VJH: Senator, what about happiness? How do you get it and how do you keep it?

TD: Happiness is also a personal attribute. It’s not something that’s tangible often times. I think Gandhi said something once that I’ve always greatly admired and believed. He said that, “If how you think and how you talk and how you do is in harmony, then you’re happy.” And I think that’s so true. If you’ve got the eternal bliss that comes with the synchronization of your actions, your thoughts, and your words, that comes pretty close to my definition of happiness.

VJH: That was excellent. That philosophy is a world apart from our current emphasis. It strikes me that we have a materialistic culture that encourages us to acquire “things” and suggests their purchase will make us happy. According to Mother Teresa, this is the very opposite of the truth. I was going to ask you earlier about your heroes and role models. People affect us either positively or negatively. Some people lift us up, encourage us, and help us to be all God sent us here to be. There are other people who are like double 00 sandpaper. They are just plain toxic; they deplete our energy. Tell me about some of the people who inspired you and who made a positive impact on your life.

TD: There are so many people who have had an effect on my life and inspired me in a very real way. The role models that I’ve had start with my parents. They were Dash and Betty Daschle who taught me my values, my faith, and my appreciation for life. I also learned from my three brothers, one of whom I just lost. I had some fantastic teachers. Sister Morris Crowley, my first grade teacher, was a mentor all of my personal and professional life until I lost her about 10 years ago. Sister Bridget inspired me to dream big dreams and to believe that I could attain them. Then there were those who inspired me from a different perspective. They were the ones who did well and lived lives that were so large: the Founding Fathers, Abraham Lincoln, the Roosevelts, Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Mother Teresa. They were people who had an extraordinary capacity to inspire, to do well, to do good, and also to affect the lives of generations of younger people like they did me.

VJH: Senator, I think that the Congress today does not get its due from the media. Most of those elected to Congress run because they want to serve their country. They work very hard to do the right thing, but, as you pointed out, it is increasingly difficult for them because of the polarization between the parties and the need to raise millions of dollars to assure their re-election. Which members of Congress have inspired you over the years?

TD: Well, I’d start with our mutual mentors and people who we have admired. One of them was Claude Pepper who embodied...
and epitomized everything about public service that I hold to be true and dear. He spoke powerfully. He fought powerfully. He acted powerfully. So from that perspective, he almost more than anyone else was someone I admired greatly. Another one was Morris Udall, one of those people who took me under his wing at an early stage in my life, and I have admired him from the very first day I arrived in Congress. On the other side of the aisle, I’d put Bob Dole at the top of my list. I care deeply for our friendship. And I have learned a lot from him in our many different roles and partnerships together. He has been a true statesman and somebody whose patriotism, courage, commitment and love for country are unparalleled.

VJH: You see me nodding in agreement with you. I loved President Kennedy’s book Profiles in Courage. I learned that this led to a special committee to choose the top five senators whose portraits are painted in the Senate reception room in the U.S. Capitol. I suggested that the Congress should create a hall of fame and honor their best with the goal of thanking and commending the lawmakers, and also inspiring future generations. I wrote a book called Heroes of the U.S. Congress: A Search for the 100 Greatest Members of Congress. We gave the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress the use of two buildings and worked with them toward creating the Hall of Fame. Unfortunately, their executive director died, they experienced money problems, and the idea lost momentum. Do you think, as I do, that this is a great idea which should be revived?

TD: Yes, I couldn’t agree with you more. And you made another point earlier that I couldn’t agree with more enthusiastically and that is that one doesn’t have to look to the past to find leaders who are eligible for that—be half of fame. One would be the most senior member of the Senate today in that category, Danny Inouye, who has given his whole life to his country, starting from an early age as a young soldier all the way to his current position as a respected and renowned senator. I would pick John Lewis from Georgia, a man who fought in the battles and the trenches of the civil rights wars for decades and rose to a much-respected position in the United States Congress. Those heroes exist today and deserve our thanks and our recognition for the commitment they make to public service and the future of this country.

VJH: You and I share a love of books. Do you have any favorites?

TD: Oh goodness, I have so many. You’re an inspiration to me when I think of my love of literature, and love of good books. You’ve been my source for good reading for many years and I thank you for that. I think if I had to pick one genre of books it would be biographies. I love good biographies because I’m inspired by the lives of others and I believe that Walter Isaacson, David McCullough, and Robert Caro are some of the best biographers around today, contemporary biographers who have done such a good job. Ron Chernow is another of those people who have really mastered the art of good biographical writing. There’s a new author, Candice Millard, who wrote River of Doubt and Destiny of the Republic, which is about James Garfield and the extraordinary character that he was. He’s probably one of our least-known presidents, but he was a special individual who endured such agony at the end of his life, first as a result of an assassination attempt and secondly as a result of the terrible care he got from those who were well intentioned but simply didn’t have the capacity to treat him as he needed to be treated. River of Doubt is about Teddy Roosevelt, who explored part of the Amazon after he became president and almost lost his life in his adventures. There is much to be learned from good biographical materials and I am constantly finding new ones.

VJH: Speaking of books, you have written several of them that I enjoyed. I am particularly fond of Critical: What We Can Do About the Health-Care Crisis. Both the content and the timing of the book were excellent. There were many recommendations that were imported into the Affordable Care Act (ACA). How do you feel about the state of health care in America?

TD: Thank you for your kind comments about my book. I was pleased that the White House and members of Congress found it helpful as they cobbled together the ACA. The ACA, of course, is a major step forward. History will credit President Obama who accomplished with this legislation what his predecessors going back to Harry Truman tried to do but failed. As I said in my book, we should cover all Americans. Health is central to everything from our ability to mount a national defense to our ability to compete in the world. The healthier we become as a society, the better our economy will be. While we have accomplished much, we have a way to go. We need to protect Medicare, which is an intergenerational contract. We also need to tackle the problem of long-term care. We need to do a better job of caring for the 5 percent of Americans who suffer from multiple chronic conditions and are responsible for some 50 percent of U.S. health care expenditures.

VJH: Forgive me for being a little presumptuous because you are still a comparatively young man with many years ahead of you, Lord willing. But how would you like to be remembered?

TD: I think I’d like to be remembered as someone who tried to be a good father, a good husband, a good friend, a good public servant, and a good citizen of the world. At the end of the day, what matters is if you’ve tried and you’ve put all of what God has given you into what it is you’ve attempted to do in all of those roles and so many more. I will be satisfied if I’m remembered as someone who tried.

VJH: I don’t want to be too personal, but we both share the love of a great woman. Would you mind my asking about Linda and what she has meant to you?

TD: I am very blessed, and I’d like to express it by using a slightly different version of a quote that I’ve always loved.
The ICD-10 transition is coming October 1, 2014. The ICD-10 transition will change every part of how you provide care, from software upgrades, to patient registration and referrals, to clinical documentation, and billing. Work with your software vendor, clearinghouse, and billing service now to ensure you are ready when the time comes. ICD-10 is closer than it seems.

CMS can help. Visit the CMS website at www.cms.gov/ICD10 for resources to get your practice ready.
Teddy Roosevelt once said, “There is no blessing like that of a good friend.” I would amend that to say “There is no blessing like that of a good spouse” and I have been blessed very generously by my partner and my spouse for 30 years. She has been the wind beneath my wings, and my hopes and inspirations have come in large part from her encouragement and from her support and from the caring way that she has adopted me as her project for these last three decades.

VJH: I like what you said about Linda in the dedication of your recent book. You said, “As with all my life, I want to thank my wife, Linda, for her constant support and tolerance. For a quarter century, she has been there at every turn, in victory and in defeat, and each new endeavor. That is true with this book, as it has been with virtually everything I have done.”

TD: She deserves these acknowledgments and much, much more.

VJH: I, too, am very blessed. Kathy looks out for me. She encourages me and makes me want to be a better man. She keeps me honest and reminds me to keep my promises should I forget one. She also gives me instant performance appraisals. I’m very proud of a portrait that hangs in my office. When my behavior comes up short, she takes my portrait off the wall. The question is where she puts it. If I find it in an adjacent closet then I know my offense was minor. Recently I announced that we should postpone a cruise in celebration of our anniversary. When I came home from work, I received her feedback about what she thought of my excuse that I had too much work and had to cancel our cruise. I found the portrait hanging on the nail on our front door where we hang the Christmas wreath. Needless to say, we kept our date to sail the Mediterranean.

TD: I think that the most important part of a relationship is honesty. The worst thing would be if our spouses did not tell us the truth. I think in part, the reason our relationships are what they are, is that they are honest. My wife, Linda, spares no word if there is something she thinks I need to know and I think that’s the way it should be. That honesty sometimes may be uncomfortable, but it’s the truth. And I think that truth is what makes us stronger.

VJH: Let me ask you if you can share one or more of the greatest lessons that you have learned in your lifetime?

TD: I would say that the most important thing I’ve learned is what Gandhi said about life. He said, “My life is my message,” and I don’t think you can say it any more succinctly than that. What kind of message do we want to send over those 80, 90, or 100 years that we’re blessed enough to live on this earth? Your life is your message and that message should be one of positive contribution to your community and to the world around you. Whether or not we can aspire to that every day is really up to us, but the most important lesson I’ve learned is that my life is my message.

VJH: Senator, as you look to the future, what is on the list of things that you wish to accomplish?

TD: Well, this world is shrinking, Val. It’s shrinking dramatically. It used to be that we felt detached from people who live in the heart of Tanzania or Kenya or Zimbabwe or, for that matter, Bangladesh. I was just in Papua, New Guinea,
a couple of weeks ago and then I was in Indonesia. We’re no longer isolated from those parts of the world. We’re all in this world together and I think we have to be more cognizant of how important it is that we treat this world in a way that’s sustainable. How do we use the energy and the food and all of those things we need to consume, and how do we do it in a sustainable way? I think it’s important, as we consider how that’s done, to think of our neighbors in Papua or in Africa or in South Asia and ask whether their lives will improve as a result of the actions that we take in America.

VJH: Senator, I apologize for asking you a dumb question because I know you well, but let me ask it anyway for the record. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of America?

TD: I think of the challenges we face. And I don’t know that they could be any greater than what Lincoln faced during the Civil War or what Roosevelt faced in World War II. We face different challenges today than they did and perhaps in some ways not nearly as immediately threatening. I think we do face immense challenges, but we also have immense opportunities and immense resources and extraordinary people, young people who want to give back and who want to take on these challenges with new enthusiasm, new energy, and new inspiration. So I’m extraordinarily optimistic about our future, but I think that optimism shouldn’t be naïve. It shouldn’t be myopic. It should come with full recognition of the challenges we face and full confidence that we can solve them.

VJH: I had the privilege of hearing President John F. Kennedy argue for the enactment of Medicare. He made all the economic arguments, but then he asserted that this was really a moral issue. He quoted the historian Arnold Toynbee who he said had done studies to determine why certain civilizations endured and others didn’t. Toynbee concluded that you could predict the durability and the greatness of every society by a common yardstick, the president said. The test was the way that each society cared for its vulnerable citizens. The president said that what was at stake in the enactment of Medicare was no less than the survival of American democracy and how America will be viewed through the prism of history. Every other society has chosen one of three policies relative to its long-lived citizens who are too sick to leave home without assistance. Enlightened societies chose to venerate their elderly. Others who did not endure chose neglect and abandonment. The third choice was euthanasia. Do you think we will come to grips with this problem and choose to venerate our elders?

TD: I would start simply by repeating an often-used quote from another hero of mine, Hubert Humphrey, who said society will be judged by how we care for those at the dawn of life, in the shadows of life, and at the sunset of life. And I think he was absolutely right. As we consider those at the sunset of life, I think of my 89-year-old mother who has lived an extraordinarily good life, at least for the last 20 years, as a result of two programs created by Franklin Roosevelt and by Lyndon Johnson: Social Security and Medicare. Because she has health and because she has at least a subsistence income, she has lived comfortably and she has lived confidently. I believe that those two achievements are perhaps as consequential as anything we’ve done in our country’s history during 200 years of addressing that aspiration so eloquently stated by Hubert Humphrey. And I think we’ve got to do everything possible to ensure that that opportunity for future generations who are at the sunset of their lives is not denigrated, is not diminished, and in no way threatens the long-term viability of the kind of standard set by our forebears.

VJH: Thank you, Senator. I have done hundreds of these interviews over the years, and this has been one of the best. I would like to close by asking if there is something you would like to add to this interview that is not particularly prompted by a question.

TD: Well, Val, I would just like to say how much I believe in the Caring Institute, the organization that you have so admirably led for so very long. I consider you a dear friend and a very inspirational person in your own right and I am honored that the Caring Institute has made the impact on people’s lives that it has for this long, long time.

VJH: Thank you, Senator. Thank you.

Note: CARING magazine managing editor Lisa Yarkony, PhD also contributed to this story.
General Colin Powell, a past Caring Award winner overcame his humble beginnings to become a general in the U.S. Army, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and secretary of state. Having served U.S. presidents from both parties the general retired to give back and help found America’s Promise, which is run by his wife Alma. He has raised more than $295 million, enabling over 10 million young people to live their dreams. In this interview, the General joins his friend Val J. Halamandaris to talk about a wide range of issues including leadership, Lincoln, and love.

Val J. Halamandaris (VJH): I want to thank you for your time. There is nothing more precious in life and the fact that you’d be willing to spend a few minutes with us matters a great deal. I wanted to ask you the cosmic questions. The whole point is to sort out the elements of your intellectual compass on the assumption that there are millions of young people out there who would like to emulate you and follow your example. If so, they need to know what you believe and why you believe it. I would like to begin by asking you to point to your role models or mentors.

General Colin Powell (CP): My parents without question, and I don’t say that in the usual trivial way that most people do when you ask for their role models. They were my parents, the leaders of my family, which included my aunts, uncles, and cousins, all living in my community in the South Bronx. As I enjoy telling youngsters, I was no great shakes as a kid. I was not the smartest of the cousins. I had some difficulty in school. I graduated from high school with a C average. I entered the City College of New York with a C average. Four and a half years later, the authorities of the City College of New York put me out with a C average. The only reason I had a C average was I got straight A’s in ROTC, and they said, “You must belong in the army.”

Many years later, I returned as one of the greatest sons that City College of New York has ever had. This experience causes me to say to young people, “It isn’t where you start; it’s where you finish.” My real point is that I was able to be a success — even through I was having difficulty at the beginning — because my parents, my preacher, my school teachers, my aunts, and my uncles refused to let me drop out. They wouldn’t let me fail. I never dared to imagine going home and saying, “I think I may want to drop out of high school. I don’t think I want to go to college.” My action would have hurt my parents to the quick.

My parents were immigrant people, and you’ll understand this, Val. They came to this country with a set of expectations for their children, and they put those expectations in our hearts. They also taught us to have a sense of shame. Most of all, you don’t ever shame the family. You don’t disappoint them or ignore the sacrifices they made on your behalf.

VJH: General, do you believe, as I do, that we have lost a little of that ethic lately?

CP: Yes. In my work with young people, especially through America’s Promise that my wife chairs, we are trying to put that sense of expectation back into the hearts of our young kids. We are trying to recreate the idea of honoring your parents and the related sense of shame that is frankly a little on the soft side these days in American life. We must bring these ideals back or we are frankly in trouble as a nation.

As I said, there were role models in my own community. But what I say to young people is, “Don’t emulate me. You are not Colin Powell. Be your own role model. Create your own expectations. Find out what you believe in. Just keep plugging away. You may not know where you are going yet, but just keep fighting. Don’t give up. Never quit. And just keep going. Look at my life, and if you find something useful in there, fine. But by all means be your own role model.”
VJH: So make your own way. Invent yourself?

CP: Yes. Make your own way. When I was growing up as an African-American kid in a segregated country — even though New York wasn’t segregated but the rest of the country pretty much was — I learned a great deal. In the north, there was segregation in a different kind of way. So other than my parents, my role models included Jackie Robinson, Willie Mays, and Benjamin O. Davis, the first black general in the U.S. Army. But these were distant figures who gave me some inspiration. More immediate inspiration comes from your community, and ultimately, it has to come from yourself or you are not going to be successful. You can have the best family, with all the assets and resources given to you and you can still fail if you don’t set those expectations for yourself.

VJH: You grew up in the South Bronx. What was that like?

CP: It was great. We were never hungry. Both of my parents worked. While they were immigrants, they worked in the garment industry down on 37th street in Manhattan and they brought home a decent wage. Perhaps it was 60 bucks a week, maybe 70 when both of them were working steadily. But it was enough to put food on the table. My sister and I always had clothing. We lived in a neighborhood that was home to many minorities. There were no majorities in my neighborhood. You were either a black from the south or a black from the West Indies. We also had many eastern European immigrants, and there was a huge Jewish component to our neighborhood. So when I came out of my tenement building and down into the street the whole UN was there. There was the Jewish baker; the Jewish drugstore man; the Jewish chicken market; the Puerto Rican bodega, a grocery store; the Chinese laundry; the Puerto Rican dry cleaner; and the Irish bar. It was all there. All of us believed that we were kind of equal.

Then I went to one of the most wonderful schools in the world, City College of New York, where everybody was relatively poor or else they would have gone somewhere else. It was the Harvard of the poor, as we liked to say, and it still is. I’m back there now working at the Powell Center.

So I grew up in an environment that was caring and warm and very diverse. Even though my academics were not what they might have been or should have been, I did get something out of that community that gave me a sense of who I was and what I was and what I could achieve though it was a segregated time in our country. I was never really faced with that segregation until I went into the Army. I didn’t experience it in the Army. But when I went south to the bases to which I was assigned it was everywhere.

VJH: I came from a small town called Price, Utah. It was a coal mining community of about 5,000 people. We had every ethnic group, every nationality, and it was just fabulous. We had the opportunity to experience each other’s customs and food. I loved it.

CP: Yes. Yes. I understand.

VJH: But the difference was that we lived in the only county in Utah that had a majority of non-Mormons, the only county that had that kind of diversity. The rest of the state is pretty homogeneous.

CP: Yes, it is.

VJH: And so it was an interesting place to be from. But the similarities with your experience were great. We had the love, affection, and support of parents and neighbors. If I were doing something inappropriate, our next-door neighbor would tell our parents, and heaven help us. Everybody in the community had the right to sanction kids on the street who were not behaving.

CP: The joke I tell my family is that in those blocks in the South Bronx where my relatives lived, there was an aunt who lived in every tenement building. And these women hung out the window all day long looking down. I don’t know when they
cooked. I don’t know when they washed. I don’t know when they went to the bathroom because every time you looked up one of them was looking down. And if you ever did anything that was wrong, forget about the speed of the Internet. The speed of the aunt-net was a lot faster. And they would turn you in in a heartbeat. And if your parents weren’t around to do something about it, they’d do something about it. They had expectations. So you had to satisfy your aunts and relatives, even your neighbors, as much as you did your parents.

Sometimes I use a little gimmick in my speeches that most people understand. I say, “Imagine a pinball machine and a kid is a ball. The kid shoots out into life and starts down that pinball machine. Of course, he makes some mistakes. He goes in the wrong direction, and this causes a lot of bells and whistles to go off. The kid is trying to hit the jackpot but he keeps falling toward the bottom of that pinball machine. And if there isn’t somebody there to flipper you back in play, to kick you back in play, you descend to the bottom.

That’s the quality we don’t have enough of these days. We don’t have enough mentors. We don’t have enough safe houses. We don’t have enough people who are in the lives of our kids from the inner city and rural areas to kick them back in play and let them know that they can make it. I’m going to do my part. I’m going to work with you. But you have got to believe in yourself. It has been my experience that if the kids don’t see that kind of positive reinforcement in everything they do, they accommodate to the negative reinforcement, such as being in a gang and doing drugs. They say, “Why not? I’m going to jail anyway or I’m going to get killed before I’m 20. What’s the difference?” This is a false choice that we have got to fight.

VJH: So you summarize your advice to young people as follows: First of all, make your own way, become your own role model, and work very hard. Integrity is important. What matters is how you come out in the end, not the journey.

CP: That’s pretty good. I would add that you should develop a reputation as you go along. People will trust you if you develop a reputation for being trustworthy. All the other things you said, such as integrity, character, and caring, are essential elements to be a successful person in life. But above all, you must believe in yourself. It is critically important that you stay in school. When in school, the first thing you have to master is the English language. This is part of my standard lesson plan to all the school groups that I address. Read, write, speak the English language well because only when you understand the English language totally and can express yourself in writing and speaking can you learn other subjects. You can’t learn math or science or social studies if you can’t read well, if you don’t understand it, if you can’t communicate it.

And I don’t think we do as well as we used to when I was coming up mastering the English language. And I never thought I had mastered it. I’m not sure I have yet, but at least it got me to where I am. Principally, this is thanks to the only teacher I can remember from those days, Ms. Ryan. She was an old lady who made us diagram sentence structures. You remember all that, Val? I can tell you that I hated it. But that didn’t stop her from drilling it into us. The surprise to me is that I have been able to use that talent effectively over the years.

VJH: For all her stern manner and her discipline, she obviously cared about you.

CP: Above all, she cared about us. Teachers are role models. But you need parents, you need a whole community. And Mrs. Clinton used to say “it takes a village.” There is a great deal of truth to that. It takes a community.

VJH: Right. These days, we’re so busy on our BlackBerrys, watching television, and kids are left to fend for themselves indoors rather than outdoors.

CP: Yes.

VJH: When I was growing up, I would do anything to go outside.

CP: There was nothing else to do but go outside. There was no television and computer. No playgrounds. We played in the street, and we made up our own games. And we got our implements to play those games. We played stick ball; our baseball bat was a broomstick. We had pink rubber balls, “Spaldings” we called them. We made up all kinds of street games.

VJH: Let me ask you about historical figures who you admire. I’m sure they would include President Lincoln, one of my great heroes. Frederick Douglass was another. I admired their relationship. Neither one would have been who they were without the other.

CP: Yes.

VJH: What I am getting at is the concept of uncommon friends, of people who work together and bring out the best in each other. For example, there was Ray Kroc and Walt Disney, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford. Who would you point to if I asked you about historical figures who you admire or would like to have around the dinner table?

CP: One of my favorite of all historical figures is General George Marshall, one of the most selfless American public servants there has ever been. I admired what he did during World War II, the Marshall Plan by which we rebuilt Europe after WWII, and I admired his relationship with President Roosevelt. He wouldn’t let the President call him George. It was always “General.” And he would correct the president. He insisted on a formal relationship with his commander-in-chief. He gave us such an example of determination but compassion, strength but empathy, realism but also vision.
Both as the commander or the chief of our forces during WWII and then subsequently as secretary of state and then briefly as secretary of defense, he amassed a tremendous record. He never wrote his memoirs because he said all memoirs are self-serving. Having said that, I've done mine and they are self-serving. That's what they are. They're memoirs.

I have always admired General Marshall so much that I had his picture in my office when I was secretary of state. Eisenhower was also in that vein. He signed my commission as a second lieutenant. So that tells you how long ago that was. But he was also a model of selfless service. He was not a screamer or a shouter. He just got people to do what needed to be done.

Both Marshall and Eisenhower have been inspirations to me because of their ability to get people to work together. They got people to believe in them and encouraged other people to be good followers. And that’s what leadership is all about: creating good followers because they believe in you. They believe in your purpose, and they want to achieve your purpose and know what they have to do. And it is totally selfless. Marshall wanted to command the invasion of Europe and he expected it. When he was chief of the Army, Eisenhower was just a colonel, and now just four years later, Eisenhower was given the greatest of all military positions rather than his old boss, Marshall. Roosevelt had made this call, saying, “Marshall, I couldn’t sleep well knowing you were not here in Washington with me.” And that was the end of it. Marshall never complained. He never said a word about it.

In 1948 when the debate raged about recognizing Israel and the State Department and so many of our smartest folks were against the immediate recognition of Israel as a state, Marshall as secretary of state opposed it. He recommended to President Truman that he not do it. And Truman heard him out. Truman said, “Thank you very much,” and later that night he did recognize Israel. So somebody went to Marshall, saying that this was a slap in the face and a rejection. “Are you going to resign?” they asked. “Have you lost your mind?” Marshall asked. “Has somebody made me the president of the United States? He’s the president. He makes the decisions. I’m his servant.” I’ve tried to emulate Marshall’s example all of my life.

VJH: It doesn’t get any better than that. I got to know Dr. Arthur Flemming, who you remember was secretary of health, education and welfare under President Eisenhower. I asked Dr. Flemming who was the best manager he ever met. He said Dwight Eisenhower.

I said, “I would not have thought of Ike in that context.” He explained: “Think about it for a minute. He had to prosecute the war, and he had under him all these huge egos, such as Generals de Gaulle and Montgomery and others.

CP: Let’s not forget George Patton.

VJH: General George Patton was another who gave Ike heartburn, but he managed those men superbly, in many cases seeming to take a back seat to them. Flemming said the way that worked was to call meetings. He would allow all to add to the agenda, giving him their opinion about what should be done. Usually a consensus developed, but only at the very end would Ike enter, announcing the decision. Flemming said Ike was the finest practitioner of consultative management. The concept was that the idea and not the person ought to lead. So if you wanted to lead, you needed only come up with the best ideas. Flemming said the best idea was almost always embraced by the General Staff and later Eisenhower’s cabinet. I just wanted to share this story with you to see if you shared Ike’s philosophy and management style.

CP: Totally. It has been my habit as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as national security advisor, or as secretary of state to always have a very inclusive arrangement with the people who work for me. So anybody could walk in just by saying, “Is the boss in?” If yes, you would be invited to come in and see me. I had meetings every single morning. I had all my staff meet with me every morning. As chairman of the Joint Chiefs, national security advisor, and secretary of state,
I always had a room full of people. I was often asked why I did that. I said it was because I wanted to see everybody every morning. And I wanted to look into their eyes and see if we were on track or if there was anything wrong. I wanted Mr. Jones’ problem to be heard by Mr. Smith so that everybody knew what everybody else was doing and could see that we had a team that was hard at work. And I wanted everybody to speak in a nonthreatening environment where nobody felt they were at risk of getting shouted at.

And it worked for me. I tended to get the best out of people that way. But as Eisenhower did, my habit also was that there comes a point when I don’t want to hear any more. I’ve heard about as much as I needed to hear to make a decision. This is my decision and it becomes your decision. You thought of this just as I did, and we all act as if it was our idea. Don’t come back and talk about it unless you have new information that requires me to go back into a decision review. I expect total loyalty in the execution of the decision. As you have suggested, this was the approach Eisenhower and Marshall used to a large extent. Eisenhower probably was a little more outgoing. Marshall was kind of reserved. He would listen and then decide quickly, but these are great examples.

Lincoln was a great example of this management school, to return to your great hero. There’s a great story about Lincoln and the general, who I will leave unnamed, who was making noise about what a terrible President Lincoln was. And he said, “You know, maybe what this country needs is not Lincoln but a dictatorship to take us through this difficult time.” All of this got back to Lincoln. The average president would have had the guy fired on the spot, maybe court-martialed, maybe put against the wall in time of war. Lincoln sat down and wrote him a letter along these lines: “Dear General, I’ve heard it in a way in which I can believe it that you have suggested that perhaps the nation will be better under a dictatorship. Well sir, only successful generals can consider dictatorships. So I suggest you win battles, and I’ll take the risk of a dictatorship.” The guy was never heard out of order again. And Lincoln saved a good general. He just had to put him in his place. Sometimes you put people in their place by chewing them out and sometimes you do a “Lincoln” on them.

There’s another great Lincoln story, and it’s where I got this quote in a little frame that’s been next to me in every office I’ve had since I became a general 30 years ago. It was given to me by a friend. The story goes that Lincoln used to escape the swamps of lower Washington where the White House is by going up to the telegraph office in north Washington close to the Soldiers’ Home. You know it well, Val. In those days, we didn’t have an Internet; we had telegraphs. And so he was there one night and a report came in that the Confederates had raided some junction out by Manassas and once again the Union Army was sleeping. Lincoln reads the telegraph, shaking his head. The telegraph operator reads it to him again and says, “The Confederates have struck. We have lost 100 horses and a brigadier general.” So Lincoln says, “Gosh, I hate to lose those horses.” And the telegraph operator says, “But what about the general?” Lincoln responds, “I can replace a brigadier general in five minutes, but it’s hard to replace 100 horses.” The point being, don’t forget who really gets the work done. It’s the followers. It’s the horses and the people who ride the horses, not the generals.

VJH: That’s great. I remember reading a biography of Eisenhower years ago. What Eisenhower reportedly said that I want to ask you about was that the single most important factor in terms of determining success in battle was the attitude of the commander. I also read that Eisenhower’s famous grin did not come naturally to him. It was said that he practiced hours before the mirror with the point of projecting a positive persona that would inspire his troops. Moreover the general was said to prefer to be out in front with his troops rather than staying back in the safety of his office. I wonder if you credit that biography. Certainly the behavior is consistent.

CP: The behavior is consistent with Eisenhower, although I think he had something of a natural grin to him. I don’t know how much he had to work at it. So I take that part of the story with a grain of salt. But it leads to one of the rules that I have followed. I have a set of 13 rules that I have used over the years...
that people have repeated and reproduced and passed along to others. But the last of these rules is that perpetual optimism is a force multiplier. So the leader, the manager or the boss, always has to be optimistic because if you’re not optimistic why should the followers be optimistic and why should they trust you? As they teach us in the infantry school, “Lieutenant, you may get cold, you may get tired, you may be hungry, you may be afraid. But you must never act cold, appear hungry or in any way show fear because if you show all those attributes, then your troops who are cold, hungry, tired, and afraid will not follow you.” They have to have something that appears immune to the pressures that they are being affected by.

Eisenhower was a good example of such leadership. The big test of those attributes is when something really, really goes wrong. At that moment, everybody is questioning what is happening. In response, the leader has to take a deep breath, suck it up, and show optimism and determination, coupled with the ability to move things forward. Eisenhower was good at that.

VJH: So was Mother Teresa, my great hero. When I asked her what was the greatest lesson she had learned in her lifetime, she responded, “You must love God with all your heart and soul, love thy neighbor as thyself. And love the hole in your heart as much as your heart.” When I asked what the last phrase meant, she said, “Whatever comes into your life, say thanks to God. Always turn what comes into your life into something optimistic and positive.”

CP: Well, that’s why she was such a wonderful, beautiful, and brilliant woman. We all have our ways of expressing our faith, but all the faiths of the world have the same thing at their central core. One of them is this belief that we owe things to other people and that doing for others and kindness to others is a part of every faith.

VJH: Let me ask you that same question. What would you say are one or two of the greatest lessons that you have learned in your life? What would you say?

CP: I wouldn’t answer. I’m often asked what is the greatest thing you’ve learned, what’s your greatest success? What’s your biggest failure? And I believe that every one of us is a product, not just of any one or two things. We are a product of every experience that we have had, of every emotion that has ever passed through us. This includes every relationship that we have ever had with anyone else. The failures and successes all blend into making us what we are.

I have been blessed with promotions and opportunities to serve, and I have also botched things in my life. I’m a product of all that. Therefore, I always find it shortsighted to single out one or two of anything and thereby dismiss the importance of a third or fourth thing. So I would try to slip away from those questions as well as I’ve just done.
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VJH: You stood on the shoulders of giants.

CP: Exactly.

VJH: We forget that sometimes. We think we did it and we forget to give credit. May I take you to the other end of the age spectrum? For the first time in history, we have a huge cohort of people who are 65 and older. Some 78 million baby boomers will hit this milestone at the rate of 10,000 a day over the next 20 years. The fastest-growing age group in our country is made up of those 85 and older. What do you say when you talk to people who are long lived? What advice do you give them?

CP: I’m one of those, Val.

VJH: I always think of you as ageless.

CP: I am in my mid-seventies. I am now in the age group where I see most of my relatives have passed on. My only sibling passed on. Funerals seem to come along more frequently now. But after a recent funeral, my cousin was joking with me. Now West Indians are great kidders. We value having a great sense of humor. My cousin looked at me, and he said, “Hey Colin, we’re in the first pew now.” The point is we are next. We all move on.

This is why your organization is so very important. It is also why the Caring Institute’s Caring Award is so meaningful to me. I have gone through the deaths of my parents, both dying of cancer. My mother died in the hospital, pretty much alone at the time of her death. My father had home care, and it was a real blessing. I also went through the death of my sister in 2005. I have also had other relatives who have struggled with these decisions, relatives who are making these decisions now about the end of life and how to deal with it. It is always hardest for the family.

When my sister was terminal I knew more about it than my brother-in-law did. He didn’t want to face it. I was groping for how to help him. My neighbor told me about hospice and that you have to slowly bring him along. It was through preparation for hospice care that I was able to bring my brother-in-law along to acceptance. The day before my sister was supposed to be enrolled in hospice she passed away. By that time it was a blessing. Since then I’ve had many friends who have gone through hospice. Hospice is the greatest gift you can give anybody at that stage in their life, not only to the person who is getting ready to pass but also to the family members who are beside themselves with sadness. They desperately are looking for someone who can help them. This is why your home care and hospice organization is so very important.

VJH: I wonder sometimes how these angels of home care and hospice do what they do. How do they treat every person like they were their own dying loved ones?

CP: Yes.

VJH: I mentioned this to Mother Teresa. “How do you do it?” I asked. I’m a pretty empathetic guy, but I’ve seen pictures of Calcutta with people dying in the streets. I could care for them for a while, but I fear I would be burned out very quickly. She responded, “Mind is everything. What matters is why you do it. If you do it out of duty or obligation or out of employment, it will deplete you. But if you do it out of love, it will energize you.”

CP: There is a Japanese television special called The Professionals. It’s dubbed in English, but it is perfectly done. They pick a professional and they follow this person through their daily work. Then they bring the person on the show and interview them. Thereafter they follow the person again for the last third of the show and in their particular job setting. In one episode they chose a nurse/hospice worker in Tokyo where she had been doing the Lord’s work for something like 20 or 30 years. She has taken thousands of people through the end of life. To hear her talk about this was just so remarkable. They followed her on her journey to help a gentleman who was close to the end, but his family was about to have a wedding. The family didn’t know what to do. They didn’t think he would last a week until the wedding. So the whole wedding party got dressed and went to the hospital and posed with him as if the wedding had already taken place. The man died later that night. But before he died he had the satisfaction of seeing his daughter in her wedding gown. Of course this hospice nurse arranged all of this. She had helped hundreds of people fulfill their last wishes. It is called The Professionals. It’s on NHK and it’s beautifully done.
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back. I don’t look back. Always look forward. Never look in the rearview mirror. There is nothing you can do about the past. I have always tried to be an optimistic person. Over the years I have always been surrounded by great friends and family who will always look out for me. I have learned you should always have people outside your immediate orbit of family. You need friends out there who are not the least bit impressed by you and will tell you when you’ve really screwed up.

VJH: I have a wife like that.

CP: Yes. Well, I have that, too. Alma, my wife, is kind of like an oxygen mask out there somewhere in the overhead. Whenever I start getting too much Secretary Powell, General Powell, Colin Powell, Alma drops down and rescues me.

VJH: What does success mean to you?

CP: Success is a daily activity. I tell people, everybody wants to get promoted in order to do this and that and receive a lot of money. But sooner or later, you’re going to find out that true satisfaction comes from being successful every day. Success means when I go to bed at night I’ve had a pretty good day and I’ve done what I set out to do. It means that I have done something well or something right. And then it just builds day after day.

So I don’t need promotions. I don’t need anything. I never have. At the same time, I’m not without ambition and I’m not without that hope. But, as I’ve told many people, if the Army had said to me when I became a lieutenant colonel “Okay, this is as far as you go; you retire now,” I would have been a very happy guy to go out and do something else because I had all those days of success. Today I see too many people driven by success. They have got to have a bigger car than you. I got to have this. I got to have that. And all it buys them is unhappiness.

VJH: The last question you partially answered a while ago. What does the word caring mean to you?

CP: Caring is a wonderful word. It essentially means that you give of yourself and you do it selflessly. You do it with no real expectation of quid pro quo or a reward. You do it because you care about somebody else and you do it because it’s part of the obligation you have to be a good person and a good citizen.

VJH: Thank you, General Powell. This was a wonderful interview.

CP: Val, it was a pleasure to spend time with you.
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