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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 underscores 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 unselfish 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 drive 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.
“We are each of us angels with only one wing. And we can only fly while embracing each other.”

The logo of the Caring Institute is an angel with only one wing. It has its derivation in the quotation from contemporary Italian poet, Luciano de Crescenzo, who said: “We are each of us angels with only one wing. And we can only fly by embracing each other.”

The award itself is a fine crystal angel holding a globe signifying the world in her outstretched arms. The Institute believes there is no more fitting image than this to give to the living angels, who devote their lives in service to others. The second part of the award is a photograph of Mother Teresa, who inspired the Caring Institute, along with one of her favorite quotations and her printed signature, neatly framed with a certificate naming the recipient as one of the most caring men and women in America. It certifies the individual’s induction into the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans, a museum established by the Institute three blocks east of the U.S. Capitol in what was the first Washington, D.C. home of the great abolitionist, Frederick Douglass.

The Caring Institute would like to thank everyone who generously support the Awards,

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Caring Institute Mission Statement

The Caring Institute was founded as a non-profit organization in 1985 to honor and promote the values of caring, integrity, and public service. Inspired by Mother Teresa, the Institute believes that the solution to most problems is the caring of one human being for another. The Caring Institute celebrates those special individuals who, in transcending self, devote their lives in service to the disadvantaged, the poor, the disabled, and the dying. We honor those individuals who ennoble the human race with their long-standing commitments to caring.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our Board of Trustees and Board of Directors. We appreciate your gifts of time and support. We are truly blessed to have you as part of the Caring Institute family.

The Caring Institute would like to thank CARING magazine, its advertisers, and especially the National Association for Home Care & Hospice for underwriting this special holiday issue honoring the Most Caring Men and Women in America.
Editors Notes

Nearly 20 centuries ago, the Greek biographer Plutarch described great men as a looking glass in which we see how to “adjust and adorn our own lives.” Since then, his Lives of classical heroes has stirred readers with tales of public virtue. “Moral good is a practical stimulus,” Plutarch thought.

We at the Caring Institute have also embraced this belief since giving our first national awards in 1988. One of our goals has always been to provide role models for young people. So it’s fitting that this year’s winners have all used their talents in some way to guide the young.

Father Greg Boyle shows his faith in an ever-loving God by giving unconditional love to members of LA gangs. Every year, thousands of them come to him for legal services, counseling, and employment. And the light he shines on their potential has guided many toward bright and productive futures.

Constantin Asavoaie also saw a light—that of God—after years serving Romania’s communist party. Afterward, he obeyed a new master by caring for the needy, and especially for orphans. His love has given these children a warm sense of home that helps them grow and bloom.

Speaking of parent figures, Rose Espinoza’s been like a mother hen to kids in La Habra, California. After moving to a low-income neighborhood, she realized that a lack of hope drives children to join gangs, so she began tutoring them in her garage. Now offered at four branches, her program has improved life on streets once ridden with drugs and gang warfare.

Sadly, these outgrowths of the urban jungle are familiar to the children whom Karin Walser assists. A former staffer on Capitol Hill, she provides inner-city kids with medical care, food, and outings. The support her work inspires has brought attention to small folk who too often go unnoticed.

Dominic Avellani also helps people who pass under the radar. Every year, immigrants and high school dropouts leave his educational center in Boston with new skills to face the world. An immigrant himself, Dominic realized the American dream and now dreams of having his students achieve it, too.

You will also enjoy reading about our young adult winners including Lauren Beeder, founder of KidsCANCERvive, Mollie and Jackie Singer, founders of Diabetic Angels, Davin Singleton, founder of Dreamers: How to Become Your Dream. Jourdan Urbach, founder of Children Helping Children, and Emily Wemhoff, founder of Project S.A.F.E.

They might also draw inspiration from Howard Behar, Starbucks’ former president. He reveals his people-oriented philosophy in an interview with Val J. Halamandaris, founder of the Caring Institute. The respect he shows customers and employees reflects his study of great thinkers like Buckminster Fuller, Leo Buscaglia, and Maimonides.

History’s great men are the specialty of Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, Doris Kearns Goodwin. She and Halamandaris discuss leadership as portrayed in her recent study, A Team of Rivals. Goodwin’s incisive book shows how Abraham Lincoln led subordinates to unite behind a common cause and free America from the curse of slavery.

Lincoln’s vision, courage, and sense of justice were among the virtues that Plutarch once praised. And by the way, Lincoln did read Plutarch. He apparently brought the Lives home from the library and took its values to heart as he forged the way to emancipation.

This made Lincoln a hero though he remained humble to the end. “It is by chance,” he once remarked, “that I happen to occupy this big White House. I am living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father’s child has.” And with guidance from people like this year’s winners, there’s a better chance that today’s children will have the values they need to assume this role.

About the Authors: Lisa Yarkony, PhD, is a staff writer with CARING Magazine who volunteered her talents to bring these stories to life.

Richard D. Brennan is the Managing Director of the Caring Institute.
The 20th Annual National

Adults

Mr. Constantin Asavoaie

Constantin Asavoaie grew up with an alcoholic father in Romania. He scrambled to get an education and enough to eat. He joined the ruling Communist party until he became so disenchanted he attempted suicide. His salvation was embracing Christianity. For this offense, Communist party officials threw him into prison for 10 years because he failed to recant. After his release, he created an exemplary program to aid prisoners, orphans, and at-risk children. Page 10

Ms. Rose Espinoza

When Rose moved into her new home in La Habra, California, she was greeted by gangs brandishing bats, golf clubs, and knives. Stray bullets fired into her home gave her the motivation to confront gang members. She learned that they and their parents couldn’t read English, making jobs for them hard to come by. While holding a full time job, she created a school in her garage, teaching them to read and write. Page 22

Mr. Dominic Avellani

Dominic Avellani was an immigrant who struggled to get an education. When his father was turned down for citizenship, Dominic created an organization to tutor and ease the passage of immigrants toward U.S. citizenship. Using personal money and all of his free time he made it happen, helping thousands including his Dad. Page 14

Ms. Karin Walser

While working for a Congressman, Karin Walser learned of the plight of the underprivileged children in DC’s eighth ward. She created an organization, Horton’s Kids, which has helped thousands of inner-city kids by providing them with medical care, mentors, outings, and tutoring. Page 26

Fr. Gregory Boyle

Father Greg Boyle was assigned to a parish in East L.A. where over 120 gangs routinely practiced murder and mayhem. Tired of burying children, he decided to create an organization where he could work full time to promote love and understanding. He succeeded in lowering the murder rate through the creation of Homeboy Industries. He has provided education, employment, and unconditional love to thousands of teenagers. Page 18

A Tribute to Doris Kearns Goodwin

Doris Kearns Goodwin is a historian who brings the past alive and makes it relevant for readers. Her biographies of LBJ, FDR, Lincoln, and the Kennedys have shown millions the traits of effective leaders. Great men, she points out, tend to have confidence, communication skills, commitment to learning, and character above all. Page 38
Caring Award Winners

Youths

Ms. Lauren Beeder
Lauren Beeder survived cancer, and she’s helping others do it, too. As founder of kidsCANCERvive, she’s raised funds for clinical research and hosted support groups for kids with cancer and their families. Lauren doesn’t think you’ve really lived until you’ve cared for others. Page 32

Mses. Mollie and Jackie Singer
Mollie and Jackie Singer are twins who’ve teamed up to cure diabetes. Their involvement began in grade school, after Mollie discovered she had the disease. They created the organization Diabetic Angels, raising money to increase public awareness of the disease and fund research for a cure. Page 33

Mr. Jourdan Urbach
Jourdan Urbach knows a lot about concertos and caring. The young violin virtuoso supports medical research by giving benefit concerts at major symphony halls. Urbach created Children Helping Children, an organization that mobilizes teens to raise money for medical research and medical care, and also to raise public awareness and bring cheer to chronically-ill and terminally-ill children. Page 35

Ms. Emily Wemhoff
Emily Wemhoff was so shocked by a tragic fire in her hometown in Nebraska that she started a one-girl crusade. She created Project S.A.F.E. (Save A Friend Everyday). She called every person in town and asked if they had a smoke detector. Emily bought one for each of the families who were without one. This evolved into a larger program that involved Emily and other volunteers helping the citizens of her state become aware of proper fire safety precautions. Page 36

Mr. Davin Singleton
Davin Singleton didn’t let dyslexia keep him from his dreams. He created Project Dreamers: How to Become Your Dream, a self-esteem workshop for kids. He also created Dreamers Feud based on the Family Feud TV program which helps build public awareness and acceptance. His work has already helped many, but if Davin has his way, all children with dyslexia will have the confidence to be whatever they want to be. Page 34

An Introduction to
The Frederick Douglass Museum and Hall of Fame for Caring Americans
The first Washington, DC, home of Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist leader, orator, author, publisher, diplomat, and statesman, is now the Frederick Douglass Museum and Hall of Fame for Caring Americans. This article provides a wonderful history of how it was saved from the wrecking ball in 1989, and how it came to serve the function it provides today. Page 60

Special Feature
Howard Behar
Howard Behar is Starbucks’ former president and someone who knows it’s not just about the coffee. His commitment to others helped Starbucks grow exponentially and expand throughout the world. Whether you’re in Asia or America, you can go there for hot coffee and a warm ambience that reflects Behar’s regard for all. Page 52
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This year marks the 22nd anniversary of the creation of the Caring Institute and the 20th Annual National Caring Awards Ceremony. This year the Caring Institute Board of Trustees has chosen to honor five adults and six young people. They will receive their awards on November 16, 2007, and simultaneously be inducted into the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans, located three blocks east of the U.S. Capitol in what was the first Washington, DC home of the great abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. In addition to honoring individuals who are large of spirit, the Caring Awards express the hope that increased public awareness will lead to financial support for their charitable activities. The Institute also hopes that by bringing these individuals to the public’s attention, they will be seen as role models to inspire and be emulated by others all across America.
“To be or not to be” may be the most famous speech in the history of theater, and it’s one of Constantin’s favorites. Like Hamlet, he paused one day and thought about ending it all. “Your life is a disaster,” he decided, “and suicide is the only way for you to go.” An inner darkness filled him as he swallowed 300 sleeping pills and turned on the gas. Miraculously, he survived to realize that, “The greatest blessing is to help people change their lives from bad to good, from darkness to light, from despair to hope for the future.”

That’s why Constantin founded Prison Fellowship Romania (PFR), a nonprofit organization that works for the spiritual and physical welfare of prisoners, ex-prisoners, victims, and their families. He and a small group of volunteers began in 1993 by counseling inmates, fighting for better conditions in jails, and setting up a national probation system. But Constantin soon saw the problems faced by prisoners’ families and decided to help them, too. “We asked volunteers from churches,” he recalls. “Then we did some fundraising, and this led to a whole network of activities.”

PFR now has 5,000 volunteers, employs a full-time staff of 142, and helps about 600 people each year at a number of unique centers. The Christian Center for Street Children provides homeless children with medical, educational, and spiritual care in a warm, family atmosphere. Similarly, the Christian Center for Children Exposed to Crime cares for prisoners’ children in a safe and loving Christian environment. Besides these homes, Constantin established a day center for juvenile delinquents, a facility for mothers and babies, an asylum for the aged, and a shelter for homeless adults.

These facilities are badly needed in a country ravaged by decades of communist misrule and disregard for society’s weakest members. In Romanian prisons, 40,000 inmates, including children, are held in conditions that fall far short of accepted modern standards. Serious overcrowding, poor diet, and primitive hygiene are the norm. Even worse are the conditions in orphanages. Staffing is so limited in many of them that children are tied to cribs and chairs, often cold, underfed, and smeared with their own feces.

These pitiful waifs are the legacy of former dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu, who imposed a ban on birth control in 1966. Within a year, women began leaving unwanted children at state orphanages and hospitals. When Ceaușescu fell in 1989, there were 150,000 children jammed into Romanian orphanages. Today, there are still some 6,000 homeless children who survive through begging, stealing, or prostitution.

Unlike them, Constantin did have a home, but he understands their sense of abandonment and despair. His early life was not easy, growing up in a poor home with a violent, drunken father. He still remembers how jealous he was of boys whose fathers asked them about their day at school and said, “I’m your dad. I love you. I’m here to protect you.” Constantin’s own father gave him nothing but blows before dying in an alcoholic coma when his son was just seven.

As sole provider for the household, Constantin remembers praying to the family cow for milk and caring for a flock of sheep. Hard as it was, working as a shepherd gave him time to study and excel in school. It also taught him an important lesson in leadership. “A shepherd,” he explains, “has to stay in front. And your voice and heart must be soft so the sheep will feel you and follow you.”

It’s best to lead with love, Constantin knew early on. Still, he succumbed to the lure of communism. Like many others, he was seduced when Ceaușescu said, “Young man, you and others like you are the hope of our nation.” Constantin’s ascent up the political ladder put him at odds with his Christian wife, Cornelia. But disillusion set in, Constantin recalls, when he saw that the communists “said one thing and believed something else.” It dawned on him that “the most important lesson in life is to honor other people.” And he was ashamed for helping the party control people through threats and propaganda.

It was then that Constantin tried to take his own life. For days afterward, his throat burned and he dozed fitfully...
in a “complete darkness.” When he woke up in a hospital three days later, he knew, “My life was broken into a thousand pieces.” Finally, he said to his wife, “Your church will be my church, and your God will be my God.”

Constantin’s defection from the party was one thing, but his espousal of Christianity was the straw that broke the camel’s back to Communist party officials. They threw Constantin in prison after arresting him on a trumped-up charge. They promised that they would let him out if he were to recant and give up his new found religion. Constantin refused. Because he refused, he suffered for 10 years in a dark 8 by 10 foot prison cell.

But prison did not break Constantin, nor did it cause him to lose faith. As a matter of fact, the opposite happened. He thought of all the ways he could help prisoners and their families when he became a free man. His faith deepened.

He carried out this mission in 1993 after finally meeting Colson. By then, Ceaușescu had been executed. The fall of communism gave rise to a new group based on Constantin’s belief that, “Caring is love in action.”

The fruits of his investment are apparent when you see what PFR is doing with at-risk kids. At the Center for Street Children, the Miracles Choir is rehearsing for one of its tours across Europe. The children who join their voices together all have troubled pasts. Some were drug addicted, some were sexually abused, others were accomplished thieves, and a few were prostitutes. But Constantin, along with his volunteers, has made them feel safe and put them on the path toward normal lives. He’s accomplished similar feats of love at his Center for Children Exposed to Crime, located in a renovated castle that once belonged to the state.

“The history of the castle is very important,” Constantin relates. “Two hundred years ago, it was built by a noble who told his wife this dream: ‘We have a happy family, and we have happy kids. I would like to do something for their future, so I will build this castle for them to live in and be happy.’ You can imagine how crushed he was when his children passed away two years later. But now a group of at-risk children is bringing his dream back to life. Some are gifted painters; others are talented dancers or great athletes; all are now in school, and many are getting good marks. “So from that castle of peace and hope,” Constantin smiles, “we got a lot of blessings in our life.”

Looking back, he knows how wrong he was that distant day when he nearly left this earth. So “remember me,” he tells us, “as someone who felt bad things, but would like others not to do the same.” It’s clear to him now that, “We don’t have the right to take our life. God gave it to us, and only He has the right to take it away. Yes, I did make a crucial mistake. Still, when you’re going through hard times and passing from the darkness to the light, you do ask yourself this question, ‘To be or not to be?’ Should you choose to put an end to your dreams? Should you give up hope for tomorrow? Should you choose never to smile again? Or should you choose to go on?”

Constantin’s resolute answer is “to continue.” So he pushes on despite the slings and arrows that fortune inflicts on us all. Like Shakespeare’s tragic prince, he’s felt them in the course of his eventful years. So have the many people who find grace and mercy through Prison Fellowship Romania. With Constantin’s love and support, they, too, may come to realize that life is truly worthwhile. No doubt they can depend on the generous man who thinks, “Caring is how we carry God’s love in our hearts.”
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Dominic Avellani

Caring,” Dominic says, “is to start with an unfinished product and finish with a completed product.” Ask what he means, and he’ll talk about an Italian teenager named Massimo Ciciulla, whom he once caught with a needle. At 6 feet 4 inches – and high on drugs – Massimo might have spooked some people. But Dominic walked up to the boy and spoke to him in Italian. “Let’s get you out of this mess by getting you a good education, maybe a job.” Afterward, Massimo gave up drugs, learned English, completed his GED, and went to vocational school for construction. Now he’s the owner of his own construction company and a millionaire.

Massimo is one of many immigrants from over 40 countries who’ve found help at the Community Education Center of the North End and East Boston, Inc. since Dominic founded it in 1972. “The immigrant comes to the center to improve himself through a good education,” Dominic says. It offers diplomas in English, IT, and U.S. citizenship. Students can also obtain truck permits, take entrance tests for vocational school, and prepare for the GED. They can even get counseling since Dominic is a licensed counselor who just retired from a 33-year career in the Boston Public Schools. An immigrant himself, he believes his students “can do what I’ve done through an education – in fact, even more.”

Dominic’s modesty aside, he’s come a long way from his very humble roots. “We’re talking a little town west of Rome,” he recalls, “that hadn’t changed since the time of Christ.” There was no running water, and Dominic used to push the leeches aside while drawing water from a local well. He also got up before dawn to work in the fields because his mom “needed a man at her side” after Dominic’s dad left home to work in a Colorado mine. “The old country wasn’t that great,” he concludes. “Every immigrant who comes to this country does not have it good in his country because, if he has it good, normally he doesn’t come here.”

Dominic and his mom would have their own chance at a better life in 1958 when the family reunited in Boston. By then, Dominic’s father was digging ditches for a living. But he brought Dominic to his first American school and said, “This is what we want you to do. We want you to get a good education. I’ll work with a pick and shovel, but I want you to become a student.”

Unfortunately, “everything was not all that rosy,” Dominic puts it, for the new kid in school. His classmates tried to extort quarters from him, chased him with broomsticks, and teased him about his broken English. “Sometimes I went home,” he says, “and didn’t want to come out.” Yet he managed to make friends, finish high school, and become the first in his family to attend college.

This experience taught him a vital lesson that he passes on to his students. “Be positive,” he tells them, “even though it’s tough right now.” To get through college, he worked long nights as a waiter, and the memory alone makes him tired. “I used to get up at 5:00 in the morning, drive my father to work, get to the college parking lot at 7:00, and start classes at 8:00. If I had given up, I never would have graduated college. I had to persevere, be persistent, and also try to make jokes. I used to say, ‘There are people who have it worse. At least, I sleep from 1:00 to 5:00. People who work at nighttime don’t even sleep from 1:00 to 5:00.’”

This sense of humor and resilience helped him graduate with credentials to teach English, Spanish, and history. After college, he went to Mexico where his “eyes opened up to the reality of what the real world is.” He knew then, “If people would take a little bit of interest and pay attention to people who have very little, they can come a long way.” It was a thought that dogged him after returning to the North End with a master’s degree in Spanish culture and civilization. He found a job teaching English as a second language, finished a second master’s in guidance counseling, and began advising students and their parents.

Talking to them made him see how much need there was in the North End. Immigrants were swarming in
from everywhere. And they were having trouble finding jobs, Dominic says, though “the immigrant who comes here, the most common word in his mouth is trabajo, or work.” Prospects weren’t better for the many American youngsters who were too busy with gangs and drugs to finish school. Seeing all this, Dominic thought, “I’ve got to do something.”

The last straw came when his father was denied citizenship. Dominic knew his dad was just one of many people who were being rejected because they spoke English poorly. “So I opened up the center mainly as revenge against the Immigration Service.” Since then, he’s helped over 7,000 people become U.S. citizens, including his father.

The government refused to embrace his inclusive vision, so it was sometimes a struggle to keep the center going. “We receive absolutely no funds from the city, state, or federal government,” he explains. “We do all fundraisers. If you receive money from the city, you can only accept people from East Boston. If you get money from the state, a portion of them have to be on welfare.” Insisting “our doors are open to everyone,” he poured his salary as a counselor into the center. By rummaging in dumpsters, he found used textbooks on everything from “electrolysis to electricity.” Nights he spent at the center working as a one-man crew of secretary, teacher, and janitor.

There was also the headache of dealing with the landlord at the center’s first location in the North End. The problem started, Dominic recalls, when the place changed hands from mother to son. The mother didn’t mind if the rent was late, but the son threatened to kick Dominic out if he was one day overdue. “Eventually, he just came out and said, ‘Look, I don’t like the dark faces you’re helping.’ That’s when I said, ‘Okay, it’s time to go.’”

The center has been at its current location in East Boston since 1984. In the years since then, it’s grown from one room to six classrooms, from helping 125 students each year to over 3,000, from a part-time to a full-time operation. Dominic now has seven teachers to help him, two of them his children. Funding is still a struggle, and some years Dominic puts in his own money. Fortunately, he hasn’t needed to do it lately since his program is getting some outside support.

Does Dominic think of moving on now that the center is on somewhat firmer footing and he has a pension? There are moments of temptation, especially since he always dreamed of traveling after retirement. But no, he tells himself, “You can’t do it. You have this program. You have people who rely on you and need you to assist them.” And he very much wants to be remembered as “somebody who helped direct others to their goals and aspirations.”

That’s why he’s still at the center instead of traipsing around the globe. He now tries to confine his work to the daytime but finds, “I’m here almost all the time, and I’m back to what I used to do. I sweep the floors. I answer all the messages. I’ll show you the notebook there. That, to me, is happiness.”

It’s worth it when he sees what his students are doing now. One was washing floors when he first arrived from Italy; now he owns a real estate company. There’s a Cuban lady who was sleeping in the park when Dominic met her. Now she’s a registered nurse and teaches nights at the center. Many of his Asian students have gone into electronics, and one student has become a successful politician. Then there’s the young man who ran up to him at city hall. Recognizing him from the center, Dominic asked what he was doing there. His answer: “I am a city auditor.”

These are a few of the successful students who’ve given Dominic his greatest thrill in life. “Graduation day, that’s my finished product. That’s when I hand them that diploma, and they go off with a big smile.”

This past spring there were lots of smiles as 300 adults and youths received their sheepskins. Present at the graduation were two of the center’s most prominent graduates. One was Pedro Rosales del Castillo, an international reporter. The other was Dominic’s old student Massimo, who told the graduates what he owed the center: “In 1986, when I came to this school, I did not speak any English. I sat on the same chairs you are sitting on today and learned English, obtained my GED here, and went on to Wentworth College for contracting. I owe it all to this school, and if I did it, you can do it, too.”

“You can do it, too.” That’s what Dominic always tells his students. Listening to Massimo, he knew he’d fulfilled his goal to change another person’s life. “Having someone walk in as a drug addict and leave with more than he came in with. That’s caring to me.”
Mother Teresa

There is joy in transcending self in order to serve others.

Mother Teresa is shown with Caring Institute Founder Val J. Halamandaris at their last meeting which took place in New York in June 1997, a few weeks before she died. The first of many meetings took place in June 1985. She took an active interest in the Institute, which she had inspired, offering advice, nominating Caring Award candidates, and accepting an International Caring Award. Famed sculptress, Blanche Baker, designed a statue of Mother Teresa, which was presented to Val J. Halamandaris, who in turn presented a copy of it to Sister Nirmala, Mother Teresa’s successor, at the beatification ceremonies held in Rome in October 2003. To nominate someone for a Caring Award or for more information, please visit www.caring.org.
“A kid and I are in a room, a darkened room,” Father Greg recalls, “and we’re silent. There’s no light, and we aren’t speaking. But he knows I’m in the room. Suddenly I reach in my pocket, and I have a flashlight. I aim it at the light switch on the wall, but I don’t say a word to him. And he says, ‘I knew I was the only one who could turn that light switch on, but I’m very grateful that you happen to have a flashlight.’ So he walks over to the light switch and flicks it on. Then he says with this amazing voice of discovery, ‘The light is better than the darkness.’”

“Most gang members would walk toward the light, if there was a light,” Greg believes. And he shows them the way as founding director of Jobs for a Future/Homeboy Industries. Greg’s employment and training program offers homeboys, or local gang members, an option to the home-grown violence that blackens their lives—and shades his, too. “I’ve had to bury lots of kids,” he says grimly, “kids I’ve loved, killed by kids I love.”

He first performed this duty as pastor at La Mission Dolorosa in Boyle Heights, a locus of gang activity in a city known as the gang capital of the world. The mean streets of East LA were far from his own roots in LA County, where he grew up with a big, loving family and attended private school. “There was no chance I would have joined a gang,” he says, “but that truth doesn’t make me morally superior to these folks—in fact, quite the opposite. I mean, I truly stand in awe of what they have to navigate.”

He realized just how much in 1984 when he began working with eight neighborhood gangs. The time he spent with them made him aware that people tend to “de-monize gang members,” though the poor kids are really “a parentless population” without caring adults in their lives. “Gangs are the places kids go when they’ve encountered misery in their life, and misery loves company.” So the question he faced was, “How do you infuse a kid with hope when hope is so foreign to him?” His answer was: “Nothing stops a bullet like a job.”

In 1988, he buried his first gang member and started Jobs for a Future. Since then, he’s buried 155 more and watched the program expand from his church to a brand-new building in downtown LA. “We have 1,000 folks a month,” Greg says, “hailing from nearly 600 different gangs all in LA County. Every one of them is more than their past, so it’s like rehab in that they leave behind their gang past and redirect their lives.”

Gang members come to Greg for job counseling, legal services, and tattoo removal. He’s also been able to give them jobs since launching Homeboy Industries. “We couldn’t find enough felon-friendly employers,” he says, “so we started our own bakery in 1992.” Afterward, Homeboy Industries branched out to include silk screening, home maintenance, merchandise with its own logo, and a café where young women serve “new Latina cuisine.” In all, there are five businesses where young people have a chance to put some “clean money” in their pockets.

“But it’s not only that,” Greg is quick to add. “It’s also an opportunity for enemies and rivals to work together. It always starts tense when you have to work side by side with a former enemy. But you can’t demonize somebody you know, and within short order, everybody becomes family here. So if gangs are bastions of conditional love, this place seeks to foster a community of unconditional love.” And Greg is part of this community, alongside young men with nicknames like Grumpy, Termite, Cartoon, Kool-Aid, Bad Boy, T-Bone, and Crazy Ace.

The homeboys see Greg as the dad they never knew, though this bond didn’t come easy. They thought he was crazy when he first rode his bike into their turf and tried to gain their trust. But they responded to his tough love and command of Spanglish street slang. They’ve even given him a moniker of his own, G-Dog or just G. It’s helped his street cred that he used to get hassled by the cops and
sometimes faced reams of hate mail. That has passed now, to Greg’s relief, “but it was a pervasive thing because people demonize the ones who help the demon.”

Though his program has gained acceptance, society still looks on gang members as disposable people. “So I find myself,” he says, “in the company of people who are despised and readily left out.” For him, it’s “the most connective tissue” with the original homeboy, Jesus, “who also stood with the poor, the voiceless, and the powerless.” So helping gang members brings Greg closer to a God “who imagined a circle of compassion and then imagined no one standing outside it.”

“In the end,” Greg says, “it’s about imitating the kind of God we have, the God who loves us without measure or regret. God’s too busy loving you to be disappointed. It’s what I always tell the kids because they get paralyzed by disappointment. They think, ‘I’ll never be able to get out from beneath it,’ so it’s liberating for them to know that God loves you so intensely that disappointment is not part of His vocabulary.”

It’s not part of Greg’s either, though this doesn’t stop him from firing people. “I always say no hanging, banging, or slanging,” he explains. “If they’re working here, they can’t kick it with their homies. They can’t sell drugs of any kind, and they can’t engage in that provocative spectrum of gangbang- ing, writing on walls, shooting, and hitting people up. I let them go because I have to protect the integrity of this place. But that doesn’t mean that I withdraw help and assistance. I always help them, and sometimes later on down the line, they’ll come back.”

When they do, he conveys his central message about “the no matter whatness of God.” For instance, “There was a kid in my office,” he remembers, “who did a terrible thing. He stole something and wanted a second chance at being able to work here. So I said yes. I also told him there was greatness in him, and that the minute he knew that to be the truth, his life would change.”

Does it work? Not in every case. So Greg reconciles himself to “the fact that it’s always going to be two steps forward, five steps backward.” But he says, “Success is not my concern,” and he refuses to keep score. “I discovered that me wanting a kid to have a life is not the same as that kid wanting to have a life. And ours is a God who waits, so who am I not to?” Besides, “you feel like you’re participating in God’s own activity by waiting as people come to see what they need.”

While he’s waiting, there are signs his work is making a mark. “In LA County,” he relates, “we had 1,000 gang-related homicides in ’92. Now we’re somewhere in the 400 range. That’s still horrific, but it’s not 1,000, so it’s progress.” Public and private grantors agree, and their support just allowed Homeboys to move from a shabby, old building to its new downtown site. The homeboys were a little nervous about the move, Greg recalls. “They were afraid we’d lose a kind of spirit here that’s palpable. And I said, ‘Oh, trust me, we’re packing that with us.’”

This sense of oneness reflects some two decades of prayer and persistence on Greg’s part. Along the way, he’s learned a vital lesson. And he knows it’s the meaning of his dream about the boy. “I think in a previous life,” he muses, “when I used to do this work here, I would try to turn that light switch on for people, and you can’t do it. You have to content yourself with the fact that you own the flashlight, and you know where to aim it. Then you hope and pray that they’ll follow that beam of light to exactly the place where they need to.”

Greg has helped thousands to find that switch, but he’s content to be known as someone who’s “inched us closer to kinship as a city.” Gang violence won’t end in his lifetime, he knows. But he thinks others can carry on his work so long as they tattoo compassion on their hearts. Where does Greg get his belief that there’s light at the end of the graffiti-covered tunnel? It comes from his faith in the intrinsic goodness of his homeboys and his unflagging conviction that, “Love never fails.”

Fr. Gregory Boyle

Father Boyle is shown here with several of his kids.
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In November 2000, Rose swore an oath of office before family, neighbors, and local kids whom she’s tutored for the past 17 years. The big smile on her face showed how proud she was to become the first Latina on the La Habra City Council. She relished this opportunity to address the concerns of her community. At the same time, she knew you don’t have to win an election to be a leader. We can all make an impact once we decide to “just do it!”

She’s done it herself since 1991 as founder of Rosie’s Garage, a tutoring program for low-income children. The program began in Rose’s own garage, and gradually expanded into four branches that now serve over 200 children. Along the way, she’s brought new life to neighborhoods once infested with gang warfare and drugs. Someday, she hopes the kids in her program will say, “I’m from La Habra, and people will say, Wow! I’m impressed with you.”

Rose has enduring faith in the California city where she’s spent most of her life. She was born there over 50 years ago in a camp for migrant farm workers. The years since then have witnessed demographic shifts as Latinos grew from a small minority to nearly half the city’s population. Along the way, Rose has watched citrus trees and pastures give way to dense apartment complexes and big-box chain stores.

Unfortunately, growth has its downside, as Rose found out when she and her husband, Alex, moved to a street across from where she was born. “We had just bought this little house in a low-income neighborhood,” she recalls. “We thought we had achieved the American dream. We quickly found out it was not the dream we had expected. Our welcome committee was a group of gang members with golf clubs and baseball bats in the empty lot next door.”

Rose knew violence – she grew up hearing about fights between young men in the migrant camps – but now she had a son to think of. Besides, she was a homeowner and didn’t want her investment to lose its value. “There’s potential in this neighborhood,” she insisted, “if we just put in the energy.”

So she and Alex did what most people do – start a neighborhood watch group. “But the gang members found the police cars parked in front of our house,” Rose says, “and sent us a message that they weren’t happy.” The morning after the group’s first meeting, Alex went to the garage and found this message spray-painted on their truck: “Don’t finger us. Keep your mouth shut.” When a bullet whizzed by their house, Rose prayed, “Dear God, help me figure out what I’m supposed to be doing.”

The next day, she knew she had to “start from the core of the issue and go door to door talking with neighbors.” After asking them some questions, she realized most of them weren’t fluent in English and couldn’t help their children with homework. The ensuing struggles in school, plus the lack of after-school activities, ultimately led many neighborhood kids to join gangs.

Rose wasn’t sure what she could do since she had a full-time job as a medical instruments designer. But she knows, “Caring means you don’t wait for people to ask you to do something; you give because it’s the right thing to do.” Besides, she’d always loved John Kennedy’s dictum: “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.” And she realized she could act on it by using her garage for tutorial tune-ups. “It was empty,” she says, “and my husband had plans for what was going to be there. However, Alex supported my dream to give neighborhood kids a chance they’d never had before.

She didn’t start out with much: old wooden tables, dented plastic chairs, and used textbooks. But neighbors donated a few school supplies, and Rose paid some high school students to help her tutor. Soon the children were flocking to the “escuelita,” as they called it. The adults followed when Rose began giving English classes with aid from a local teacher. Next thing she knew “the gangs started liking us because it was their siblings, their nieces, their cousins, and their nephews we were helping.” Soon, “we built a relationship in the community that didn’t exist before.”

This was so important to Rose that she paid for every-
thing herself at first. So she was relieved when word spread about her efforts and “the community rallied around us.” The local post office donated books, and schools gave desks. Parents learned to assist with tutoring. In recent years, Rose has also had a 5K walk/run to raise funds. Every year, she tells people to “come out, bring your family, and get some exercise.”

It takes endurance to go the distance, and Rose is an expert on the subject. To run the program, she’d leave work at 3:00, go home to the garage, return to her job, and work until nearly midnight. Things were tense at home because Rose was spending all her time at work or working with the kids. But Alex soon came around because he saw the importance of what she was doing.

Rose’s labors have oiled the engine of daily life near her home. The gangs are no longer rattling the neighborhood. The kids are all revved up because their test scores have shot up. And Rose’s English classes have given the adults a jump start in life. “Many of the parents have realized the value of an education,” Rose says, continued their schooling, and found jobs they never expected to get. There have been similar changes around her other sites, including one gang-riden neighborhood whose desperate residents offered her use of an abandoned house for her program.

After doing so much “to help her people rise,” you’d think Rose would give herself a break. She certainly deserves more time to kick back with Alex in a hammock, listen to music, drink a root beer float, and watch the leaves swing—all the simple things that make her happy. But Rose believes, “We all have to take on a challenge.” So she’s still expanding Rosie’s Garage. “We’ve got visions,” she says. “We’ve got plans. And we want input from people who’ve had success in their communities.”

She welcomes “the wisdom and wealth of knowledge” that older Americans can bring to volunteer work. “If you want to keep on living beyond your time here on earth,” Rose urges them, “this is certainly a way of doing it.” Don’t go with the same old bingo or little trips that we take. Get out your Crayolas, and start coloring outside the box.” You might discover you can enrich yourself by leaving your comfort zone.

Running the tutoring program has certainly taught Rose some life-transforming lessons: “I’ve learned that I could make a difference with or without funds, that I could be

If you want to keep on living beyond your time here on earth... get out your crayolas and start coloring outside the box.”
imaginative, and most of all, that I enjoyed a challenge.” In addition, there was the experience of going out and meeting new people. “That has been the greatest pleasure, and now I’m very comfortable talking with anyone.” Armed with her new-found skills at public speaking, she sought a platform to help the public at large.

In 2000, she ran for a seat on the city council, and community members again rallied behind her, though they feared for the future of Rosie’s Garage. When Rose told them “it’s not going anywhere,” they threw their hearts into getting her elected. Kids from the tutoring program labeled mailers and passed out campaign brochures. Their parents came out in force to vote for her, and so did their grown-up kids. It was their way of saying gracias for all she had done. And it worked.

It was still dark when she picked up the phone and heard, “Good morning, Councilwoman.” Then this year, she was selected to act for the mayor in his absence. It took guts for the daughter of migrant farmers to become mayor pro tem. But Rose believes, “This is the land of opportunities, and I want to take advantage of them to venture into things I’ve never done.”

As councilwoman, she addresses the concerns of all city residents, not just Latinos. Yes, she wants to give her compadres a stronger voice in city hall. But she knows their concerns generally relate to education, housing, and quality of life. They are issues that affect everyone, and Rose learned much about them in her garage. It’s also where she saw that it takes a community to turn a community around. And every one of us, as she explains, can lend others a helping hand:

We can all make a difference. And you begin by changing your neighborhood block by block.”

It’s not just the leaders that you see in the paper; it’s not just the police department; it’s not just your elected officials. We can all make a difference. And you begin by changing your neighborhood block by block.
Karin Walser

"An elephant’s faithful one hundred percent,” says Horton the Elephant in one of Dr. Seuss’s classic books. You can say the same about Karin Walser, founder and executive director of Horton’s Kids. Like Horton, she heard a cry for help unheard by others, and found she could not turn away.

Karin’s group gets its name from Horton Hears a Who, Seuss’s tale about creatures so tiny that they and their town can fit on a speck of dust. Horton, with his big ears, hears the Whos’ cries for help one day when the speck of dust flies past his head. His attempts to protect the Whos lead his friends to taunt him since they can’t hear the tiny beings. But even the meanest of monkeys can’t make Horton budge. He stands by the Whos “through thin and through thick” because “a person’s a person no matter how small.”

Karin Walser thinks so, too, and that’s why she has devoted herself to improving life for impoverished children in Southeast DC. The children she helps live in Ward 8, which has more kids and fewer services than any other place in the District. The children regularly hear gunfire outside their doors, go to one of the country’s worst schools, and sometimes don’t get enough to eat. Many of their parents are well-intentioned, but unemployed. Others aren’t always sure where their children are.

Most people don’t hear these little Whos, Karin says, though the kids live in a housing project that’s “in the shadow of the United States Capitol Dome.” Unfortunately, children in Southeast neighborhoods aren’t as visible to the city’s more affluent residents as needy children elsewhere. “It’s not like people see Ward 8 children standing on the street corner every day,” she explains.

Karin herself once worked on Capitol Hill as press secretary for Representative Joe Moakley of Massachusetts. But she didn’t “hear the Whos” until one night in 1989, when she stopped for gas at a station across from a large homeless shelter. Manning the pumps were children so small that she couldn’t help but wonder “what could compel a child to cross six lanes of traffic at 10:30 at night.” She wouldn’t let them pump her gas, but she did give them some money and found out where they lived. The next day she returned to take them to the zoo.

This small act of kindness has evolved into a comprehensive program that has over 500 volunteers, and helps more than 300 kids from the Wellington housing project. Three times a week, the volunteers pick up the kids at a local basketball court, and take them for tutoring sessions at the House of Representatives and Department of Education. The tutors are lobbyists, congressional staffers, and other professionals who are determined to improve the children’s math and reading skills.

They’re also committed to helping the children live better lives. The volunteers work on their social skills and buy them clothes. They bring them to dentists for their rotten gums and to dermatologists for ringworm. They provide special schooling for those who need it, food for the hungry ones, and sometimes even groceries for their families.

On Sundays, Horton’s Kids takes the children on outings, including trips to museums, parks, and the zoo. The kids have gone to the top of every monument, and they’re frequent visitors to the White House. They’re also honored guests at the annual Thanksgiving ceremony where the president pardons one lucky turkey. Karin likes to joke that “my children are the best connected inner-city children in the country.”

Karin wishes she could do more because she still thinks about the swarm of kids who begged to come along with her the day she showed up for that first outing to the zoo. “I’ve always been haunted by the sight of the children I left behind, by the children I couldn’t fit in my car, and I still am,” she says wistfully. “I have at least 222 children on the waiting list to get into Horton’s Kids, many of whom are standing at the dusty basketball court as we pull away in the school buses. Although we give them food and Christmas presents, I don’t think I’ll feel like I’m even close to done until every one of them is on the bus.”

Karin’s commitment to the kids didn’t require her to search through a vast field of clover, as poor Horton did after an eagle absconded with his speck of dust. But she did have to devote all her free time to the kids until 2001, when a number of grants allowed her to finally leave her
job on the Hill. In addition, she had to give up her studies toward a master’s degree in social work when they began to take too much time. She had already invested a great deal of money and effort in her degree, but she thought to herself, “I need to keep on doing Horton’s Kids.”

Much of what she does is not very glamorous, she admits. “When somebody throws up, I clean it up,” she laughs. “When somebody’s mad, I talk to them. When there’s somebody who needs to be placated, they trot me out. It’s not a glorious job I have.” But it’s one that stems from her conviction that “caring means noticing somebody’s pain or their struggles or their empty stomach, and doing something about it.”

At first, Karin says she did everything on her own, and this made her program particularly unique. “But now, we have lots of volunteers from Capitol Hill,” she is relieved to note. “We have so many members of Congress who help us with these children, from both sides of the aisle, and they all agree these babies need help.”

“If you are sincerely trying to help people, nobody ever says ‘no’ to you,” Karen has learned from working with her many fine volunteers. “Part of my secret, if I have one, is that I’m helping these children, and it’s the right thing to do. So it’s not that I’m particularly successful, but that my cause is particularly just.”

The growing support for her program leads Karin to believe she has inspired a movement that won’t end with her. She looks forward to the day when the buses will “pull away from that dusty basketball court with not one single pair of eyes staring longingly at us.” She hopes a time will come when “my children and their families have all the tools that they need to succeed, and be powerful, contributing members of society.”

Karin knows it’s up to other people to finish her work since, “It takes a long time to change a person, and it takes a long time to change a neighborhood.” While the end product may lie far down the road, there are already encouraging signs of change. “I definitely see a difference in individual kids and their families, so that’s really exciting,” she’s pleased to say.

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Not only are many kids doing better in school, some of the parents are now on Karin’s staff and attending child development classes. Karin admits, “We initially hired these women purely selfishly, thinking they would help us control the kids on the bus, and they’ve turned out, obviously, to do that,” she relates. “What I didn’t realize was going to happen with them was that they, too, were going to blossom.” The women’s pride in their work gives Karin hope that someday, “we’ll eliminate the need for organizations such as Horton’s Kids.”

She’s also happy to see that her kids have inspired a wave of support that transcends partisan lines. In recent years, members of Congress and lobbyists have competed in an annual “Hoops for Hope” basketball game that donates part of its proceeds to her group. Last year, high-profile Democrats and Republicans joined in a silent auction to raise money for Karin’s mission.

The “archconservatives” and “lefty liberals” of Washington’s political jungle may not agree on much, as Karin knows from her time on the Hill. But like the beasts in Seuss’s tale, they concur, in the end, that all deserve life, “no matter how smallish.” Whether Democrat or Republican, “a lot of people on Capitol Hill are there because they care,” Karin says. “They all feel wonderful if they are making a difference.”

“I think you find happiness,” she suggests, “by listening to that little voice inside everybody that’s saying, ‘You need to do something good.’ I believe everybody has that, and I think if you don’t listen to it, I suspect that contributes to unhappiness. But if you just face the fact that it’s there and obey it, then I think you can find peace.”

Perhaps, you can find even more, if you’re someone like Karin, who thinks success is “to feel you have done what you set out to do, done it to the best of your abilities, and left the world a better place.” By this measure, Karin is a tremendous success. Her work with Horton’s Kids has provided a kind and faithful response to hundreds of tiny voices in Southeast DC.
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Passionate for the Appropriate Use of Medicine
Each year, the Caring Institute invites nominations of persons age eighteen or younger for consideration as Young Adult Caring Award recipients. From the numerous applicants, the Caring Institute’s prestigious Board of Trustees selects award winners by secret ballot. This year’s awardees are truly inspirational. Their accomplishments in caring for others are but a prologue of things to come. A short profile of each of these young people can be found on the following pages. Reading about them will give anyone confidence that the future of America is in good hands.
Lauren Beeder

Psychologists are fond of saying that we cannot control the events that come into our lives, but we can control how we react to them. Every human being gets tested in some way. Some encounter adversity and are crushed by it. Others are alchemists who turn even the most crushing blow into something positive. This is what Mother Teresa meant when she said, “You must love the hole in your heart just as much as your heart.” In the same vein, Hemingway wrote, “Life breaks us all, but the lucky ones grow stronger in the mended places.”

Sixteen-year-old Lauren Beeder is one such person, one of the lucky ones who survived cancer as a youngster, and since then has spent countless hours inspiring, encouraging, and comforting others.

“If you make someone’s day every day,” she says, “then you’re doing something right.” It’s a notion she picked up at age nine when she and her mom started visiting nursing homes near their house in Newbury Park, California. They brought along Lauren’s dachshund, Gary, who sat calmly on patients’ beds and gently licked their hands. This made Gary a big hit though Lauren was the star attraction, especially for one small, blonde woman who’d always put on lipstick and scoot over in a wheelchair to greet her.

Lauren has also gotten a warm welcome at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, where she’s a certified volunteer. The adults adore her for babysitting their kids while they attend support groups. And she’s happy to do it because “it helps parents who are under so much stress.” She also enjoys playing with young cancer patients, and loves how “the little kids live in the here and now.”

They get really excited at holidays when Lauren shows up with decorations and gifts. At Christmas, she helps hospital staff turn the pediatric cancer ward into a festive winter wonderland. When it’s Halloween, she dresses up in a costume and gives the kids wheelchair rides down the halls. Ordinary days are special, too, when Lauren blows up hundreds of balloons, sets them loose in the ward, and sings “a very merry un-birthday to you.”

Unfortunately, cancer is enough to burst anyone’s balloon, so Lauren has also helped out by founding a nonprofit called kidsCANCERvive. Her organization raises funds for research, and has so far given Children’s Hospital over $35,000. It also fosters online support groups among children with cancer, their siblings, and their parents.

Talking with them over the years has helped Lauren grow. “Volunteer work is teaching me about human nature,” she says, “and someday I’d like to become a psychologist.” In the meantime, she’s picked up some great tips on how to feel complete. For example, older people have taught her an “amazing” amount, especially about how to take pleasure in “small joys.” She’s found that “the children’s energy just brightens my day” and concluded “there’s a lot to be learned from little kids about how to be happy.”

She’s also looked within and come up with a few insights. She knows that, “You’re a successful person if you’re a happy person.” She’s come to see, “You have nothing if you don’t have people you love and people who love you back.” And finally, “In caring for people, you feed a part of your soul that goes unnoticed. If you ignore that part of your soul, you’re not a whole person.”

Lauren represents a victory of the human spirit, learning early in life the importance of being grateful. The best way to say thanks for all your blessings she says, is to give back and share them with others. Besides she adds, “It feels good when you do good for others.”
Mollie and Jackie Singer

You may have heard about the awful toll diabetes is taking on the U.S. If you have, you know that 20.8 million people have diabetes, one in three children is expected to become diabetic, and it costs taxpayers $135 billion a year. That figure alone should spur the search for solutions, according to Mollie and Jackie Singer, a pair of eighteen-year-old twins from Las Vegas, Nevada. Together, they're putting a face on these figures in their hopeful campaign for a cure.

Mollie learned she had diabetes at age four, and Jackie – who doesn’t have the disease – has been watching over her ever since. She’s made sure Mollie tested her blood sugar, saved her life a few times, and stood by her when people complained, “Diabetic children are a hassle.” Coping with Mollie’s disease hasn’t been easy for either of them, and they think often of Mother Teresa’s plea: “I know God won’t give me anything I can’t handle. I just wish He wouldn’t trust me with so much.”

It helps that “we’re a team,” Jackie says. “I think there’s a reason why there’s two of us. God put us on earth to do things together and help each other.” You might add that He gave them the strength to look beyond their own problems. “By the time we were four or five,” Mollie recalls, “we knew what it was like to suffer, so we’ve learned to be patient and understanding of others.”

In fourth grade, they passed this lesson on by founding the Diabetic Angels. Classmates who joined the club learned about the disease, and promised to become “guardian angels” to Mollie and children like her. They also agreed to write Congress in support of more funding for diabetes research. But writing letters wasn’t enough, the twins realized. They needed to make their cause more real by “putting a face on diabetes.”

Their determination to beat the disease has brought them into the halls of power and the homes of regular folk. They’ve met with President Bush, lobbied senators, and testified before Congress in favor of stem cell research. They’ve also appeared on “Good Morning America,” made public service announcements, and organized annual walks that collected more than $500,000 for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

“We’ve had a lot of practice,” Mollie laughs, “in getting people to listen to us.” They’ve put some of what they’ve learned in a booklet called The Road to a Cure. It gives pointers to parents and kids on fundraising, health fairs, and public speaking. The focus is on diabetes, but the advice the twins offer could apply to almost any cause. “Our goal,” Jackie says, “is to encourage people to help others. If everyone gave back just a little, it would cause a rippling effect of giving.”

They also broadcast this message as a country music duo. The Singer sisters, as it turns out, are talented singers who plan on studying music in college. Already seasoned performers, they intend to keep on raising their voices for all the suffering faces behind the data on diabetes. “We will be their voice,” Mollie says firmly, “and they will be heard.”

Perhaps someday you’ll have the luck to catch Jackie and Mollie in concert. If you do, you’ll see two slim, young women with long hair and dazzling smiles. Enjoy their songs, and look carefully at their faces. You’ll see the faces of caring, compassion, and love.
What do Albert Einstein, Edgar Allen Poe, and James Earl Jones have in common? They all had dyslexia, and they’re among Davin’s heroes. Eighteen-year-old Davin has dyslexia, too, yet he’s convinced, “You can do anything you set your mind to.” It’s a lesson he’s passed on to hundreds of school children at his self-esteem workshops.

The Pasadena, Maryland, teen knows how easy it is to give up on your dreams. As a student at Jacobsville Elementary, he was “shattered” when his teachers told him he’d never be able to do much, and placed him in special education. But “I just needed to be taught differently,” he knows. By the time he was in high school, he had more than caught up with students his age.

He had also begun to think about the many kids who weren’t sure they could succeed. “I wanted to plant a seed at an early age,” he explains, “so they would never suffer from low self-esteem.” He was so committed to this goal after junior year, that he spent most of the summer putting together his workshop: Dreamers: How to Become Your Dream. By September, he’d come up with posters, a Dreamer’s Pledge, and a game called Dreamer’s Feud, based on the TV game show Family Feud.

He submitted his syllabus to 10 Maryland schools, and two accepted it. One was New Mark of Excellence in Baltimore. The other was Jacobsville Elementary, where he’d once felt so blue. Between the two schools, he conducted 18 workshops, and then revisited each class every other month.

At first, the children seemed to wonder, “Who is this guy, and why is he in my class?” But he won them over with his upbeat approach and ability to relate to them. “Being empathic and knowing where other people come from” is Davin’s idea of caring, and it helped him connect with the kids. Soon “they were asking me to come back every day.” They liked the candy he sometimes slipped them, and loved the way he made them feel about themselves.

“How many of you believe you can do anything you believe in?” he asked them. At first, only “50 percent thought they could,” he recalls. By the end of the school year, “Everybody said ‘yes.’” Among them was a little third grader named Anthony who touched Davin because he also had dyslexia. “I know what it’s like,” Davin says, “when you can’t tie your shoes, read numbers, or tell right from left.” So he gave Anthony a special certificate when he started believing in himself.

Recently, Davin also received some kudos. There’s talk of making his workshop a regular part of the curriculum in some Baltimore-area schools. And he’s been accepted at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America where he can pursue his dream of becoming a chef. He hopes someday to have his own restaurant, and he should succeed because he’s already a great cook.

Besides whipping up a mean lasagna, he knows what it takes to help others do their best. “Leadership,” he explains, “means having a humble heart, a service heart. Nobody wants an arrogant leader. You want someone who’s friendly, but knows exactly what to do.” And you can tell Davin knows what he’s doing from talking to the kids he’s helped. “He’s cool; he’s my best friend,” they peal when you mention his name. Thanks to his guidance, they now believe that they can become their dreams.
Jourdan Urbach

God gave two great gifts to Jourdan Urbach. At age 15, he is a budding medical researcher who has presented a number of well-received papers. He’s also a violin virtuoso who began playing when he was three, and has already performed at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and Madison Square Garden. Music and medicine would seem to be worlds apart, but Jourdan has harmonized them for the sake of sick kids. As founder of Children Helping Children, the Long Island teen has been fiddling for philanthropy since he was seven years old.

That’s when he read Gifts of Time by pediatric neurosurgeon, Fred Epstein. Jourdan was so moved by the stories of children Epstein had helped that he wrote the doctor a letter. Epstein, in turn, invited the boy to tour the pediatric ICU at New York’s Beth Israel Hospital. By the end of the visit, Jourdan knew he wanted to be a neurosurgeon and help kids like those he’d just seen.

Though he was too young to act on this dream, he realized, “There’s no age limit for helping other people.” He also knew the power of music to reduce pain. So he rounded up a group of young musicians and convinced them to give some time to brain-damaged kids. They began performing monthly bedside concerts at Beth Israel, and then branched out to other hospitals in the New York area.

A pediatric ward is an unusual concert venue, as Jourdan can attest. “I perform with a lot of alarms and beepers,” he says, “but you get used to it.” And, fortunately, he plays to a receptive crowd. There’s no doubt that he’s good at getting the kids involved, especially when “they start jumping up and down on the beds trying to conduct.”

The magic of Jourdan’s music became clear not long after the debut of his group. “I was playing,” he recalls, “when they wheeled in a girl who seemed completely unresponsive. All at once, the alarms sounded and the doctors came running because the girl had moved her arm.” It sounds like a miracle, but apparently Jourdan’s playing had stirred some part of her brain.

Donors, too, have responded to the plaintive call of Jourdan’s violin. Drawing on his contacts in the music world, he’s staged benefit performances for large audiences and enlisted major symphony orchestras to join him. The donations thus far have amounted to more than $1.3 million for charities including the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Institute for Music and Neurologic Function, and Beth Israel’s Institute for Neurology and Neurosurgery.

Besides these impressive proceeds, Jourdan has garnered some great reviews for his playing. Critics have called him a “brilliant performer” and “young Paganini” with “buttery-smooth playing and laser-sharp technique.” Nice praise, though it’s not how Jourdan judges what he does. “Success,” he believes, “is being able to fulfill a basic human need to help others.” That’s why music now plays second fiddle in his long-term plans for a career. “I think I can make a bigger difference through medicine,” he concludes. “Music is basically a very selfish field.”

Music’s loss will be medicine’s gain if Jourdan trades in his concert tux for surgical scrubs. But either way, he’ll surely fulfill his goal to “affect other people in a positive way.” That’s because this amazing whiz kid has yet another talent on top of everything else. It’s a gift for giving, and it may be his greatest gift of all.
In 2002, Emily was just twelve and a bit afraid of talking to new people. So what could have possessed her to call all 217 households in her hometown of Creston, Nebraska? It turns out she’d just heard about a deadly fire that ripped through a home with a broken smoke alarm. “Do you have a working smoke alarm?” she asked whenever someone picked up the phone.

A few people were annoyed and thought she was a telemarketer. But she told herself, “Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don’t matter, and those who matter don’t mind.” That’s Emily’s mantra, which she got from Dr. Seuss, the literary funnyman with some serious things to say. It was clear Emily was also serious when she applied for a grant, bought 25 smoke detectors, and brought them to homes without one.

That was the start of Project S.A.F.E. It stands for Save a Friend Everyday, and Emily doesn’t just care about keeping her own friends safe. “Caring,” she understands, “means being concerned about people you don’t know.” And many of them were at risk, she realized, when she kept reading about fires throughout Nebraska. Clearly, a smoke alarm wasn’t enough if you didn’t have an escape plan.

Given the lives at stake, Emily wanted to make sure her safety message would spread like wildfire. She organized a phone chain in which people across the state urged relatives and friends to practice their fire escape plan. Then she set up informational booths at community events, and wrote to 100 schools asking students to practice with their families. Finally, she decided to organize Nebraska’s first Practice Your Fire Escape Plan Day.

She wanted to reach as many as possible and knew she couldn’t do it alone. Though this was her project, she realized, “Leadership is not always about taking charge. Sometimes you have to give others a chance to lead, too.” So she contacted the volunteer firefighters in nearby Columbus and asked them to get involved. They invited her to speak during opening ceremonies at the 2005 Nebraska State Fire School.

“I was a little worried about meeting the firefighters,” she admits. Still, she approached them with a plan to distribute yellow wristbands to schoolchildren with the message, “Practice Your Fire Escape Plan.” The firefighters thought this was a great idea, and helped her by passing out 18,000 wristbands.

While the firefighters did the legwork, Emily hawked her project on the radio, persuaded some fast food chains to include the wristbands with their meals, and arranged for a billboard to spread her message. The space didn’t come free, nor did the wristbands; so Emily applied for grants, set up a hot dog stand, and asked local businesses for donations. Her campaign caused her to meet lots of new people, including Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman, who declared October 1, 2005, as the state’s official Practice Your Fire Escape Plan Day.

It would be hard to believe Emily was once shy if you caught her smile that day as she and the governor stood on stage. But she’s learned “community service can change the person you are.” Now 18, she’s very outgoing and wants to go into the people-oriented field of broadcasting. You might ask how we can explain the new Emily. And she’ll respond, “Volunteering helps you grow into the kind of person you’re meant to become.”
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Doris Kearns Goodwin was born and raised on Long Island, New York. She received her B.A. from Colby College, where she graduated Magna Cum Laude. While at Colby, she was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa, the international honor society. She received her Ph.D. in Government from Harvard University, staying on to teach several courses there, including one on the American presidency. Following her tenure at Harvard, Ms. Goodwin served as an assistant to President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968, his last year in the White House. Thereafter, President Johnson paid her the high honor of selecting her to assist with the preparation of his memoirs.

She married Richard Goodwin, who had worked at the White House during the both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Together they raised three boys. Mr. Goodwin received some notoriety as the investigator who uncovered the television quiz show scandals of the 1950s; his exploits were lauded in the Academy Award nominated movie, Quiz Show, directed by Robert Redford. In between duties as a wife and mother, Mrs. Goodwin researched and wrote Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream, which was published in 1976 and became a bestseller.

With painstaking research over the next several years, she authored a political biography entitled, The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys, which stayed on the New York Times best-seller list for five months in 1987. In 1990, it was made into a six-hour ABC miniseries. Following this same formula, she wrote and, in 1995, published her third book, No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The American Home Front During World War II, which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. This book was received with much applause; it won her numerous awards and was on the New York Times best-seller list for six months.

Ms. Goodwin’s book, Wait Till Next Year: A Memoir, was published in 1997. It describes growing up in New York during the 1950s, and her love of the Brooklyn Dodgers, a passion she shared with her father. This book brings to light her knowledge, understanding and appreciation for baseball, both as a sport and a metaphor for life. It became a New York Times best-seller as well as a book of the month club selection. A Washington Post reviewer wrote, “This is a book in the grand tradition of girlhood memoirs, dating from Louisa May Alcott to Carson McCullers and Harper Lee.” As she says in her book, when the Dodgers left town, she left them. Today, she is a passionate fan of her beloved Boston Red Sox.

Her most recent work, a monumental history of Abraham Lincoln entitled Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln, was published in October 2005, joining the best-seller list on its first week in publication. It soon reached #1 on the New York Times best-seller list, and won the 2006 Lincoln Prize for an outstanding work about the president and/or the Civil War. It also won the the inaugural New York Historical Society Book Prize, the Richard Nelson Current Award, and the New York State Archives History Makers Award. Moreover, the acclaimed movie producer, Steven Spielberg, is developing a feature film based on the book, which will star actor Liam Neeson as Lincoln.

The common denominator for all her work is echoed in the language on the two statues which guard the entrance to the National Archives in Washington, DC. The first reads, “Study the Past.” The second, “What is past is prologue.” George Santayana’s comments were along
the same lines: “Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.”

In her books, Ms. Goodwin seeks to promote understanding of what happened, when, and why. In addition, she has sought to identify lessons for individuals and for society. Her biography of President Lincoln, for example, not only deals with the causes and resolution of the Civil War, but also with the struggles of individuals (including the President and his cabinet) to find answers to a vexing combination of problems, which threatened the very survival of American democracy. She concludes that President Lincoln was the personification of the Judeo-Christian values, which require us to love our neighbor (even those who differ with us, to the point they set themselves apart as our enemies) as we love ourselves. The war, she believes, was won because of Lincoln’s strength of character and his unique combination of vision, values, and the ability to inspire others to do the right thing and to be their best. In Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln, she analyzes in some detail the qualities that made Lincoln such a great leader. Most of all, she says, he was gifted with emotional intelligence, or to put it another way, a hyper-developed sense of caring about others.

It is always a great honor to meet Doris Kearns Goodwin and to have the opportunity to interview her. In our colloquy which follows below, she underscores in simple terms the qualities that made President Abraham Lincoln so special. She also responded to a wide assortment of what I call “the great cosmic questions.” In this interview, she shares much of the wealth of knowledge that she has gleaned from a lifetime of research.

What will be immediately apparent to the reader is that Ms. Goodwin herself is rather large of spirit. She has many of the same qualities which made Lincoln, JFK, and FDR great. For example, she has great integrity, a quality often associated with President Lincoln. She has a superior intellect coupled with the ability to see much further down the horizon than most people. Her vision has its roots in her ability to see things as they really are. This allows her to measure and accurately project, to see clearly the future which will eventually be experienced by all. She has the gift of listening with energy. The fact that she cares deeply about all people is obvious from the fact that she looks at each person, regardless of their station in life, squarely in the eyes and captures every word they utter as if it were a diamond or nugget of gold.

Like President Lincoln, she has a highly developed sense of empathy. She can readily imagine herself in the place of others with problems. She is willing to pay the price through hard work and to feel their pain. At the same time, she is authentic, meaning that she is consistent in thought, word, and deed. Like President Roosevelt, she is also a woman of action. As is obvious from the first paragraph of this introduction, she has accomplished far more by the mid-point in her life than most people will ever do in the full length of their term on earth. She is also great fun and has a great sense of humor, which was a strong suit for both Presidents Kennedy and Lincoln. Finally, she has the gift of using language to uplift, unite, and move people to action which is common in all great presidents. The quality of her writing is second to none, worthy even of her heroic role models, Leo Tolstoy and Barbara Tuchman.

Doris Kearns Goodwin is, in short, a fascinating and extraordinary woman who deserves the respect and commendation of all good men and women everywhere. I am confident that our readers will enjoy exploring the elements of her intellectual compass and sharing her insights almost as much as we did in the preparation of this article.

Val J. Halamandaris (VJH): Doris, I want to begin by thanking you. First for the quality of your life and the manner in which you have used it to help others. Second, for the great work that you have done. Third, for the gift of your time. Finally, I would like to commend you for your latest book, Team of Rivals: the Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln, which I think is extraordinary.

May I ask you as we begin this colloquy, to share a few of the lessons that you learned from studying the life of President Lincoln?
Doris Kearns Goodwin (DKG): After studying Lincoln for 10 years, it seemed to me that his great strength had to do with what we might call today, his emotional intelligence. In your terms, he was an extraordinarily caring person with a number of positive human qualities.

When you think about it, politics is all about human relationships. He knew this and lived this. He understood that if you treated people with respect, if you were able to forgive your enemies, if you were able to acknowledge your mistakes, and if you were able to take blame for your subordinates’ problems, that people would then return those acts of compassion and sensitivity. This in turn would create a continuing circle of relationships that would help advance your career, and accomplish goals that are important to you and the nation. The key to his success was his ability to understand other people, to empathize with them, and to react with thoughtfulness and compassion.

In the opinion of many, these are qualities that somehow are too soft for political life, and yet, he proved that in the hands of somebody with great self confidence and the courage of his convictions, they can become an unbeatable combination.

(VJH): It was interesting to hear you say that this strength was also perceived by many contemporaries as his weakness.

(DKG): I agree with that. I think what Lincoln had was a temperament that was so well suited to be a leader, because he was constantly thinking about how to deal with the people around him, how to buoy them up when they were sad, and how to give them strength when they were beginning to falter. This undoubtedly helped the beneficiaries of his interest, but in the long run, it also helped him. I mean, in a certain sense, by helping others to become better, it became almost contagious. He brought out the best in them because they saw his internal qualities, and were moved to respond in kind until this became part of the culture and a natural way of dealing with people.

Lincoln had operated this way with people all of his life, and was resolved that this kindly way of doing things wasn’t going to change once he became president, or even after others, learned from them, loved his enemies and as such, was the embodiment of Judeo-Christian values.
the outbreak of the Civil War. His historical lack of malice and his genuine compassion, had he lived, would have been extended toward the south during the reconstruction. Undoubtedly, our country would have been a better place than it is today had he lived.

(VJH): It seems to many that candidates these days will say anything in order to be elected, but Lincoln was somebody who was truly authentic. He said what he meant and he meant what he said. As you know, Lincoln is the most respected American according to most polls. When he was asked who he respected most, he said Frederick Douglass. So much so that when he was assassinated, as you know well, Mary Todd Lincoln sent the President’s walking stick to Frederick Douglass where it is still on display at the second and final Douglass home in Washington, DC. As a matter of fact, at the very time that we are doing this interview, Secretary of the Interior, Dirk Kempthorne, is reopening this home and museum, which has been closed for repairs.

(DKG): Oh, that’s thrilling.

(VJH): Tell us about their relationship, if you would be so kind.

(DKG): Their friendship was truly remarkable and paid enormous dividends to the nation. It was not always amicable because Douglass had started out quite critical of Lincoln. He said that Lincoln was taking much too long thinking about emancipation. He was upset that Lincoln was not enlisting black soldiers in the army early on. Douglass said all this and more to Lincoln when they first met. Douglass did not let up in his speeches and wrote criticisms of Lincoln. Lincoln absorbed all this. He listened to Douglass, and explained why he, as president of all the people, had to deal with things in a different time frame than perhaps Douglass, who was an advocate and agitator. As time went by, the two men began to draw closer and closer.

At their next meeting, President Lincoln asked Douglass for help in certain ways. Douglass couldn’t wait to help. For example, Douglass went out and recruited blacks for the Army once Lincoln opened the door to this end. Lincoln signed a paper giving Douglass safe conduct and permission to cross Union lines for such recruitment.

Their last meeting was at the second inaugural in 1865 when he had invited Douglass to come to the reception that followed his speech. A security guard stopped Douglass from entering the White House, thinking that no black would be invited into such an august social setting. Lincoln, of course, had sent word to make sure he got in. The minute Douglass came into the room, Lincoln, with his huge booming voice said, “Douglass, my friend, come over here,” and then said to him, “What did you think of my inaugural speech?” All eyes were on Douglass who seemingly was a little embarrassed. Douglass thought for a moment, then said, “Mr. President, it was a sacred effort.” Coming as it did at the end of the Civil War, which resulted in a victory against slavery and preserved the Union, this is one of my favorite moments in the history.

Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist is shown standing with his family in front of his first Washington, DC home in this 1871 photo. Douglass inspired President Lincoln to “do the right thing” and issue the Emancipation Proclamation. The Caring Institute was instrumental in renovating this home, which today functions as the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans. See related story beginning on page 60.
Later, Douglass was asked to give a eulogy of Lincoln, which is superb. In it he shows us he understood completely that Lincoln might have seemed slow and retarded from the point of view of an abolitionist, but from the point of view of a president who had to take into account the feelings of all the people, he was fast and progressive and advanced. They were both towering figures in American history. They both had different roles to play, and they played them brilliantly and together.

(VJH): You have also written that Lincoln’s timing was impeccable.

(DKG): Absolutely. What I mean is that a leader in a democratic country must be able to educate the public and bring them to the point where he or she wants to take them, and then be able to pounce when recognizing that citizens have arrived at the point of maximum opportunity.

I remember Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, tried to warn America about Germany way back in the 1930s. In 1938, he gave a Quarantine the Aggressor speech. Nobody wanted to think about Europe at that time, because we were still such an isolationist country. He was threatened with impeachment in the Congress for even bringing up the idea of taking preparatory actions against the dictators in Europe.

Understandably, he was frustrated. “It’s a terrible thing,” he said, “to lead a parade and look back, and no one is following you.” He knew he had to close this gap, so he moved step by step to educate the country. Long before we got into World War II, he began to educate us on the need for a draft, for land lease, and all of the reasons why Europe’s survival against Hitler was important to us.

Lincoln had a similar experience. He had to move step by step toward emancipation, and then toward the goal of allowing blacks in the Army to make sure the country was ready for the end result. He also knew when the country was ready and how to seize the moment.

(VJH): I think it was fascinating to enumerate the steps he took before issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln, it seemed, was always looking for the greater good. He was always looking for ways to let other people save face including, for example, Jefferson Davis. I apologize for seeming to tell you things you know better than any of us, but I thought the background would be of interest to our readers. On September 22, 1862, Lincoln signed an order, coupled with a message to Jefferson Davis, that if the Confederacy didn’t come to the table and negotiate peace before the end of the year, he would allow the order of the Emancipation to become effective on January 1, 1863. The point being that he gave Jefferson Davis and the South an opportunity, and only when they chose to ignore it did he proceed.

(DKG): Oh, absolutely. In fact, even prior to that, he had always hoped that he would put a tax on the American public, which they would be willing to pay, for every slave that was freed. He was really talking to the border states and the Southerners to say, look how much this war is costing us day after day.

He thought he might buy, in a certain sense, the slaves in order to allow slavery to come to an end. This he reasoned would be so much better and cheaper than having to do it through war, but his idea wasn’t accepted. So he did exactly as you say, he went with the Emancipation Proclamation. But even then he said, “Here’s this window of time. See what you can do before January 1.” So it was a warning, but it was also an olive branch and a chance to save face, a chance to take control of events if the South chose to do so, which, of course, sadly they did not.

(VJH): Some people tend to think of Lincoln as a sort of melancholy figure. Was Lincoln ever happy? This begs another question: What is happiness anyway? How do you get it, and how do you keep it?

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right . . ."
— Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, 1865

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I came away from my research realizing that part of our impression of Lincoln as a perpetually depressed person came from the pictures of him. He had that long face and that unfortunate beard. People never smiled in those days when the cameras took pictures, because their head had to be planked against the back of the chair so it wouldn’t move. We do know that he was born with a melancholy temperament, but he had an extraordinary ability to know his own moods and to figure out ways to get himself out of them. I do believe that he found deep fulfillment in using his talents to the fullest, which is one important measure of happiness. He also had a great sense of humor. He loved to laugh and make others do so.

I believe that part of his sadness was due to the early death of his mother and sister. He knew life could be short and uncertain; he worried that he might not have the chance to do something significant. He knew that he had a certain set of gifts, but he always worried whether he would have a chance to exercise these talents given the constrictions of his environment.

He used to love this sad poetry about a young person, a villager, who died young and was buried in an unmarked grave, even though he had real poetic talent. But then, I think, what happened is that he got into public life, and he found an outlet for his unique talents. He knew he was helping the world and making the world a better place. As difficult as the war years were for him, he was always aware that he had a chance as president to do things that would improve the quality of life for others.

All of this mitigated the sadness he experienced. So yes, I think he was happy in that deep sense of inner fulfillment you get from knowing, “I’m doing something with my life that’s worthwhile.”

In answer to the second part of your question, I believe that this sense of being useful and helping others is the source of happiness for most people.

I think the best advice I ever got was from Erik Erikson, the great psychologist. When I was a graduate student at Harvard, he suggested that as young people we look at our lives as if we were older and looking back. He also said that many people who are in the last third of their life lead the most serene lives if somehow they have found over their lifetime, a balance between three things: work, love, and play.

You have to commit yourself equally to each one of those dimensions so that you find a truly fulfilling life. You find work that fulfills you. You find play—that is, some sort of vocation or avocation, whether it’s a sport, or a hobby, or a game, that really allows you to forget for a few moments about your work. If you are lucky, you also find love, meaning family, friends, and commitment to children and neighbors.

He warned us that there would be certain times in our lives when things would not balance out for us. But the important thing was to realize that in the long run you have to lead a balanced life.

During those days I spent with Lyndon Johnson at the end of his life, I was sadly struck by the fact that work had so obsessed him that in retirement he didn’t have the resources left to enjoy his life. He would go to baseball games, but he really would never watch the play. He would just be talking politics. His family adored him, but it was almost like the hole in him was too large for their love to fill it up fully.

This made me realize as a 25-year-old that even if I had great ambitions, that to pursue them at the expense of love and play would probably be counterproductive in the long run. The experience with President Johnson, I think, began to show me the truth of what Erikson was saying.

It was probably no coincidence that not long after watching Johnson in those last years, I met my husband, I got married, I had three children within a short order of time, and I realized I couldn’t do it all. I couldn’t be a professor and a writer and be with my kids, so I gave up teaching in order to be at home with them. This also had the benefit of allowing me to try my hand at writing.

It was not always easy. I think a couple of years into my
Kennedy book, I was at a cocktail party and somebody, not realizing I could hear, said, “Well, whatever happened to Doris Kearns, anyway?” As if I had died, because I was no longer a professor at Harvard. I wanted to hit them and say, “I have three boys. That’s what happened to me.” But I’ve never regretted that time — even though it took 10 years to write that book, because it was a pleasure to be home with the boys. Time goes so quickly when children are growing up.

When I look at the young men they have become, I know I made the right decision. I have learned that there is a time for everything. You can always go back to lecturing, you can go back to television, go back to writing, or to teaching at Harvard, but children grow up and move on. I think this was what Erikson was trying to teach us. You may not have the balance at one time in your life, but if you keep each one of those realms alive, then at some point you can draw them together when you get older.

(VJH): I was going to ask about your heroes and role models. You just mentioned Professor Erikson and have previously mentioned Barbara Tuchman, if I remember correctly.

(DKG): Right. I remember reading her books when I was in college. The reason, I think, Barbara Tuchman mattered so much was that here was a woman who wrote history; what is more, she wrote military history. I still have never learned how to write about a battle. She was just a fabulous writer. She did tons of research, and she knew how to tell a story. She became a heroine for me because she was so good and because she was older, having combined family and writing.

There are two others I started to mention. I had a teacher in high school, Ms. Louise Alston, whom I admired. She won an award as the best history teacher in New York state. I remember she was so involved in her teaching that when she talked about Franklin Roosevelt dying, she actually teared up. It mattered to her. During the civil rights movement, she talked about racial segregation with an equal degree of passion.

I was also inspired by Al Mavernack at Colby College, who taught us political history. He made us feel that if we could understand what he was saying about Plato and Aristotle, we would understand truth and justice, and the mysteries of the universe.
These teachers just had such a passion for what they were doing. They lit a fire in us. They brought me to one of the most important lessons that I have learned. The most important thing is to find some work that you want to throw yourself into, something you love doing every day, and that you lie awake thinking about at night. Joseph Campbell captured the thought when he addressed young people to “follow their passion, follow their bliss.” These people had it right, and they started me out on the right path.

(VJH): We share a hero in Leo Tolstoy. Please tell me why you admire him so much.

(DKG): I must have read “War and Peace” five times in my life. I just keep coming back to it again and again. As a writer, there is much you can learn from these great writers. Somehow they weave character, and in his case, real history into their books and make them come alive. I think Tolstoy is the best writer ever.

(VJH): Clearly he had a gift as you have a gift. I remember Emerson saying that there really is no such thing as history; there is properly only biography.

(DKG): Exactly. In fact, I wish that history was taught more as biography in high schools. I think there is this felt need to cover territory, and instead what you should be trying to do, is inspire a love of history in students. Young people have a lifetime to cover the territory. We need not try to cram it all fast forward into one semester. However, if we were to take a biography of a representative figure, not necessarily even a big figure, but big and little figures in a particular era, students could learn about that era and the events of the earth through that person. If they care about the person, they will care about the era. History should be told in stories.

It makes me so sad when people come up to me and say, “I hated history in high school, and now 30 years later, I’m reading it.” Why can’t we make it like most other subjects where anybody could absorb it? Everybody should be able to love history if it is taught the right way.

(VJH): May I now take you to the other end of the age spectrum? For the first time in history, we have a huge generation of Americans, some 35 million strong over the age of 65. At the same time we have 78 million baby boomers who will soon be of
retirement age. What advice do you have for the senior generation present and future?

(DKG): Well, you know, it seems to me that the most important thing for older Americans is to have something when they wake up in the day that makes them feel that they still have a productive mission to perform. Whether it’s helping somebody in their neighborhood, learning something or helping young people, it is important that they feel that they are still growing and moving forward.

Indeed, there’s a friend of mine who started something in Boston called Bedside Advocates. He’s in his 80s, and the idea is to get retired nurses, EMTs, and doctors to go to patients in the hospital and just be their advocate, because hospitals are such bureaucracies right now that people get lost sometimes. He somehow has gotten the approval of some of the hospitals in Boston to start this volunteer program.

This started me thinking after the Walter Reed scandal, what if every veteran coming back had a retired nurse, EMT, or social worker attached to them, to help them through their rehabilitation process?

(VJH): I think JFK’s call to service is even more important now than in 1960. The same Baby Boom Generation ought to make it their business to look out and provide care for their colleagues, many of whom will be battling chronic disease. Do you have a comment?

(DKG): The graying of the baby boomers will present both new challenges and opportunities. I admire the work done by home care and hospice workers and volunteers. I also agree that we need a new ethos of public service among not just baby boomers, but all of us as Americans. People need to feel useful, productive, and fulfilled. We need to help those with disabilities to continue to be part of the American Dream.

Seniors need to look in their neighborhood, their community, in that larger world, to perform those same acts of caring that they did when they were younger. This will help them forget their own problems and make them feel young. They will feel like they are part of a huge cycle of life that is going forward, not that they are just marking time living out their last years in some sort of sense of isolation.

(VJH): Years ago I met Mother Teresa. The first time —

(DKG): That must have been amazing.

(VJH): It was amazing. Not unlike meeting you.

(DKG): That’s an incredible thing to hear.

(VJH): I met Mother Teresa in 1985, and she told me that there was a poverty of spirit in America and in the developed world that is much worse than the poverty of the body that you see in the Third World. “Do something about it,” she said. “Use the power of caring. Caring is the one-word summary of the Golden Rule. It’s the most powerful force in the universe.”

So that started us down the journey of creating the Caring Institute and the search for the most caring men and women in America. Through Divine Providence, we established the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans in Frederick Douglass’ first Washington, DC, home. Now, there is this museum three blocks from the U.S. Capitol which brings together Mother Teresa, Frederick Douglass, and men and women of their spirit. Do you think America will become again what it always was, the most caring nation on the planet?

(DKG): How interesting. Yes, I do. As I said a while ago, I know of someone, a former judge who might qualify for a Caring Award. He had his own experience in the hospital, and one of his friends, a retired doctor, had taken care of him during that period of time. So now he is devoting his remaining years to helping others who find themselves in the same circumstance.

I think one of the problems for the country that our caring professions, whether it is teachers, nurses, or social workers, do not get much material benefits or recognition for what they do, and yet, these professions are the core of what keeps this society going.
To your point, it is always so amazing to me that there are certain times in history when it seems like community spirit is larger than at other times. The 20th Century, for example, was the progressive era when there was a mobilization of support in the country as a whole to try and do something about problems of the Industrial Era, for example, tenement housing, infectious diseases, child labor, and the gap between the rich and the poor.

It seemed like the whole society was mobilized to care, and you had leaders that articulated it, beginning with President Theodore Roosevelt. But there were ministers, journalists, and corporate leaders who were all talking about this. This phenomenon happened again in the 1930s, obviously during the Depression, when we were led by FDR. It happened again in the 1960s, which was that extraordinary decade when the combination of the civil rights movement, the war on poverty, the Peace Corps, the Teacher Corps, Medicare, and all these things came together. We also had leaders in Kennedy and Johnson who mobilized that spirit.

When I look forward to this 2008 election, one of the most important things I believe is to have president who can mobilize that dormant spirit of the country as a whole. Obviously, there are caring individuals who are doing important things within their own communities, but every now and then, the whole society gets mobilized in a larger way.

Thank goodness it happened during World War II when Roosevelt was able to call on the nation to serve and sacrifice. You had people volunteering to be air raid wardens, to grow victory gardens, to collect aluminum-scrap and rubber, and to staff the factories which produced the goods we needed for the war effort. Everybody felt part of that war effort, and everyone contributed, which is a major part of the reason we won. Our home front was mobilized to produce what was necessary to win the war on the front lines.

I believe that this is the ultimate task of leadership, to figure out how to mobilize that community spirit. Mother Teresa may be right that there is a poverty of spirit today in America, but there have been other times when it has been extraordinary. We have only to think of Lincoln’s time and the sacrifice made by abolitionists and many people in the North, many of whom gave their lives to end something that they felt was wrong, even though it did not directly affect them very much. It was a matter of principle, and there was a perceived patriotic duty to stand up for what was right and best for America.

So we have this unique capacity in this country. In fact, I would argue maybe even more than most other countries, but it needs to be mobilized. The spirit lays dormant; the media don’t help it at times, but at other times it does. So the real challenge is a matter of leadership.

(VJH): What is the greatest lesson or one of the greatest lessons you’ve learned in your lifetime?

(DKG): I believe it was the lesson my father taught me about looking at life with as much positiveness as you can. He grew up in a very sad circumstance. His father was a fireman in Brooklyn, and he had a brother who was six years old when he was ten, and another sister who was two. The brother was hit by a trolley car and died. His mother died in childbirth a few months later, and then his father committed suicide.

So my father at 10 years old was caring for his two-year-old sister. He helped to bring her up. When she was 16, she was in a dentist’s chair and something went wrong with the anesthesia, and she died.

While the events were tragic, you would know none of this if you had met my father. He was always positive, and he had this great spirit and a demeanor that said, “I’m going to still lead my life in a positive way.” When he walked into a room, everybody wanted to go over to him because he had a magnetic positive personality. His example was the greatest gift that he gave to me. He added, “If you’re open and warm to other people, then they will return it to you.” He taught me that everybody goes through sadness in their lives, although he had more than his share. It was tough for him and all of us when my mother died even though she was only 50 years old. But yet, a few years later he met another woman, he married again, and had a wonderful second marriage.
My father had this great indomitable spirit. He taught me that if you can approach life with warmth and an open spirit, people will respond to it. This gives you the strength to go on and help others. Fate sometimes deals an unkind hand to people. We can’t control what happens to us, but we can control our attitude toward it and how we respond. My father was always positive and responded magnificently.

(VJH): Mother Teresa had exactly the same advice. “Regardless of what comes into your life, make it into something positive.”

(DKG): Absolutely.

(VJH): When I asked Claude Pepper what Lincoln had in common with Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was his great hero, he said to me, and this is a direct quote, “They both had souls sweetened by suffering.”

(DKG): Oh, that’s wonderful. I think that’s true. People said Franklin Roosevelt somehow became a deeper person after his polio. He then could identify with other people for whom fate had also dealt an unkind hand. Before polio, he had had a privileged life, seemingly without a care or worry. He personally experienced how life could be turned around in a second. Here was this athletic man in his late 30s who could no longer walk. But instead of allowing polio to destroy him, he allowed it to make him a deeper, more caring person – somebody who wanted to give to other people. In a sense, he was liberated by the process of taking control over his own disability.

(VJH): As you know, I spent many years as Chief Counsel to Congressman Claude Pepper. I took advantage of the opportunity to ask every question that came to mind. I asked Pepper if FDR had ever voiced any lessons learned from the Great Depression. He quoted FDR as saying: “We have always known that heedless self-interest is bad morals. Now we know that it’s bad economics.”

(DKG): How wonderful. Oh, that’s a great quote as well. I think Roosevelt understood that the way to get the country moving again was to get people to be able to work together and to be part of a government that helps people, who could then support the economy and their fellow citizens. Laissez-faire, which meant letting businesses do whatever they perceived to be in their best interest, had been the reigning ideology for so long. This wasn’t working morally, and it wasn’t working economically.

(VJH): I think, sadly, that we have forgotten some of these lessons. But, as you say, we are such a resilient country that we can rise above it all given the right kind of leadership. I would like to ask, how would you like to be remembered?

(DKG): Well, I think there are probably several levels to that. I mean, my middle son has just told us two weeks ago that he is having a child, which will be our first grandchild. So I think the most important level of memory will be for my children to pass onto their children, the real substantive memories of what it was like to grow up in our household, the love that we gave to those children, and the strength that they have, hopefully, that came through us. No doubt they will then impart these same values to their children, so that whatever your memories are in the larger world, they will still be the core of how I or anyone would like to be remembered.

I have always heard people say that it’s so exciting when you had grandchildren, but I hadn’t fully realized the reality of this until that moment he told us two weeks ago. It dawned on me that, yes, there will be yet another generation who will hear the stories that my son will be able to tell, of what it was like to grow up with me as his mother, and my husband as his father, just as I have told stories about my father and my mother. The cycle will continue, so that’s the central thing.
When I think in terms of my professional life, it is a thrill to think that these books, especially the one about Lincoln, will endure for such a long period of time. When I did my research, I was reading books on Lincoln that went back to the 1860s-1870s. The idea that the book on Lincoln will live on is comforting. I hope that people years from now will be able to say they learned about Lincoln as a person, or they learned about Franklin and Eleanor as people. They came alive for me, possibly through my writings. As a writer, it is a fact that you really do live on in the reading pleasure of people. This is the great thing about the written word. It goes on for generations. It is a thrill to imagine that a book you might have written with a lot of effort and love, will provide insight, understanding, and inspiration to future generations. I must say it is a pretty great feeling.

(VJH): *It has an immortality all its own.*

(DKG): *It does indeed, yes.*

(VJH): *Someone once wrote that true patriotism is keeping faith with one’s ancestors. You have certainly used your life in a manner that would make your father proud. You have kept his traditions alive, for example, by attending Red Sox games with your sons, and by passing along lessons he had taught you, especially about being ever positive. You have done the same with our founding fathers and great figures in American history. I think what you have done is the ultimate form of public service. You have demonstrated true caring, which Mother Teresa said was “Love in action.” In closing I want to thank you. This has been a real pleasure.*

(DKG): *Well, you’re quite an extraordinary man, this is great.*

(VJH): *Thank you so much.*

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: What are you doing for others?”
–Martin Luther King, Jr.

“What is important is that one be capable of love. It is perhaps the only glimpse that we are permitted of eternity.”
–Helen Hayes
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Howard Behar is the former president of the Starbucks Coffee Company International, which was created in Seattle, Washington, in 1971. Mr. Behar joined the company in 1989 when it had only 28 stores. His first job was executive vice president for sales and operations. He joined the company a few years after Howard Schultz, the man who succeeded him as president. The two men became fast friends, and together shaped the destiny of this corporation, which has been so amazingly successful.

In six years, Mr. Behar grew the business from 28 outlets to more than 400 outlets. This enviable track record resulted in his being promoted to president of the company in 1995. While continuing the judicious expansion of stores in the U.S., Mr. Behar led the company in a bold initiative, taking Starbucks international. Skeptics said that he and the company did not have a snowball’s chance for success overseas given the differences in language and customs. Mr. Behar proved them wrong. Under his leadership, Starbucks opened its first coffee shop in Japan, and it proved to be a big hit. Following this historic opening, he introduced the Starbucks brand to Asia and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Behar burned the Starbucks brand deep into the consciousness of the entire world. With the help of his team, he made Starbucks one of the most successful and most respected organizations. It topped the list of best run corporations and best places to work. Having reached the pinnacle in sales, employee and customer satisfaction, Mr. Behar retired from the day-to-day operations in 1999.

The respite, however, was short-lived. His steady hand was missed at the helm. He was asked and agreed to rejoin Starbucks in 2001 as president of its North American division. As such, he was responsible for overall leadership, management, business development, and the operations of Starbucks in the U.S. and Canada. He served in this capacity until 2003. Although he left the operations to Howard Schultz and others, Mr. Behar has never left Starbucks, either in fact or in spirit. He remains a member of its board of directors, and has agreed, from time to time, to take on special projects.

Mr. Behar was well prepared for the position he accepted at Starbucks. He had joined Thousand Trails, Inc., a leading developer of private outdoor resorts, in 1983 as its vice president for resort services. He was promoted to senior vice president for field operations in 1986, and in that same year, elevated to the post of president and chief operating officer. Prior to his experience with Thousand Trails, he held merchandising and sales leadership positions within the home furnishing industry.

Since his retirement, Mr. Behar tries to spend as much time as possible with his wife, Regina, and his extended family. He spends a great deal of time volunteering to help other organizations. For example, he is on the board of The Gap Inc., Anna’s Linens, the Washington State Budget and Policy Center, and the Jewish Family Service Board.

Howard Behar is in demand as a writer and speaker. People inevitably want to know how he did it. What was the secret that allowed him to take a tiny coffee company from the 28 outlet stores primarily in Washington state and turn it into an international powerhouse? Today, there are some 13,000 Starbucks outlets found in every corner of the globe.

Mr. Behar had so many requests to tell his story that he decided to write a book that was completed in 2007. The book, which will be published in January, is entitled It is Not About the Coffee: Leadership Principles from a Life at Starbucks. As the title suggests, the book is an honest effort by Mr. Behar to share the wisdom gained in his 19 years of leading or helping others lead the company.

The central premise of his book is that while Starbucks produces great coffee, this is only the beginning. Their success is based on the superlative, anticipatory service they give to their fellow human beings. The Starbucks’ secret is in the way they uplift people and make them feel just a little better about themselves. Starbucks seeks to elevate the human
spirit as well as nourish the body. In his book, Mr. Behar shares ten principles to live by. For example, “Do it because it is right, not because it is right for business,” he says. “Care like you really mean it,” he adds, underscoring the fact that people want to spend time with others who sincerely care about them as a person. “Listening,” he continues, “is the key to caring. This can only be done face-to-face assuming that you make time for people,” he contends. In the same vein, he talks about empowering people to make decisions. “The person who sweeps the floor should choose the broom,” he maintains. He advises “creating recipes not rules.” He says Starbucks employees are trained to say “yes,” the most powerful word in the world. The only thing you can’t do at Starbucks, he writes, is something “illegal, unethical, or immoral.” On a personal level, he writes it is crucial to “think like a person of action and act like a person of thought.”

Mr. Behar says that what is important, both for a corporation and for individuals, is to wear one hat. By this he means to have integrity, be who you really are, and stand by your principles. The lodestone for Starbucks he said, “Is to become one of the most well-known and respected organizations in the world, known for nurturing and inspiring the human spirit.” He says it is important to have a guiding principle “which is bigger than any of us.” He described in detail the measures that Starbucks takes to train its employees to become better people, resulting in their treating others better, thereby fueling the growth of the business.

Mr. Behar gave a preview of It’s Not About the Coffee at the recent annual meeting of the National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC), that was held in Denver, Colorado. In that speech, he spoke of his personal experience with home care and hospice that involved his parents. He commended the nurses and other caregivers for the high quality of personalized care that they render to the aged, infirm, disabled, and dying Americans. He made positive comparisons between NAHC and Starbucks International, pointing to a community of values between the two organizations. In addition, he offered practical advice on how the angels of hospice and home care could adapt the Starbucks principles to improve the operation of their organizations and serve the public even better. When he completed his remarks, he received a thunderous standing ovation. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Behar sat down for an interview, which follows below. What was obvious to all concerned is that he is an extraordinary human being with a passionate desire, both personally and professionally, to help people and make the world a better place. In this he has succeeded, in doing far more than most human beings ever dream of doing. He deserves the respect and commendation of men and women of integrity all across the globe. CARING is proud to salute Howard Behar and the management of Starbucks Coffee Company International, and to share their story with our readers.

Val J. Halamandaris (VJH): Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to be with us. It is wonderful that you are eager to help teach people the lessons you learned at Starbucks. I was thrilled to hear that you have a new book coming out called, It’s Not About the Coffee, which is described by the publisher as a roadmap to success. Can you tell me what the central premise of this book is?

Howard Behar (HB): First, thank you. It is great to be with you. Thanks for mentioning my book. The central premise is that everything we do in life revolves around other human beings, and it is understanding that, and accepting that, and believing that, and supporting it that really makes a difference. We all either sell things, or create things, or give services to other people, but it’s the human interactions that we have that really matter.

We have to be careful what words we use to describe others. When we see people that we work with as employees and label them as such, it begins to take their humanity away. When you describe people we serve as customers, it causes us to think of them as if they have a dollar bill pasted to their foreheads. If you just treat them appropriately with great respect and lift their spirits, they are going to give you their dollar bills and look forward to seeing you again.

At the end of the day, Starbucks is all about creating relation-
ships, no matter how small, with each other, and in so doing, making the world a better place, one human interaction at a time. The book, as you say, is about my life and the education I received at Starbucks.

(VJH): You have mentioned to several people that you love including Howard Schultz, the current chairman of Starbucks. I gave you my definition of love last night. It comes from Victor Hugo, who said, "Love is the ultimate recognition we give to those with superlatively held values." We love you because of your highly developed sense of caring. Who would you say are your heroes and role models?

(HB): Well, it is a long list beginning with my family. I love the ancient Jewish philosopher Maimonides. What stands out most in him for me is how he described the importance of giving, the highest form of which is anonymous.

All giving is good, but you have to give your time as well as your money. It took me a while to understand that. So here is a human being who lived centuries before any of us, that passed on a gift of his wisdom to me, and helped me to live a better life.

At the dinner you hosted last night, Diane Deacon was talking about Buckminster Fuller. When I was very young, I read a little book on Buckminster Fuller, and I became a fan. I couldn’t get enough of him and how he lived his life, what he thought about creativity, his inventions, his philosophy, and the manner in which he inspired people. Somehow he touched my life; so when I think of great people, I think of him.

(VJH): We share a hero in Leo Buscaglia.

(HB): Yes, I love Leo Buscaglia. I have all his books and I met him once. Around every corner there is a person waiting to help. Some are famous like Leo, but others are not. All we need to do is ask and listen. Most of these people will never see their name in a newspaper, but somehow they are always there to help you.

(VJH): The common denominator, it seems to me, is that they are all large in spirit. When you come into their presence, you feel uplifted. It’s palpable. I certainly felt that way in the presence of Mother Teresa. Tell me about James Autry, the author of Love and Profit.

(HB): James Autry is a friend. He is an awesome guy. His friendship is a great gift. What he has accomplished is amazing. He gave Starbucks a huge gift in Love and Profit. He created a whole new dialogue at Starbucks with his book and who he is as a person. We had always aspired to the principles he outlined. He helped us apply them in a more global way. But you know, loving people are just everywhere. They will help you find the answers if you just open yourself up to them.

(VJH): I wanted to ask if you would share a few ideas from It’s Not About the Coffee: Leadership Principles from a Life at Starbucks. You did say that early on you dreamed of being as well-known and successful as Coca-Cola. It sounded like fantasy at first, but through hard work it happened.

(HB): Well, first of all, coffee is what we sell and what we serve. The coffee has to be great. This is our ticket to play. We love our coffee. It’s our music. It’s our art. I mean, we are creative with it. We buy the world’s best, and we try to roast it in the most high quality way. We care about it.

But it’s people that make all of this happen. A person planted the coffee trees, another harvested the beans, others bagged it and shipped it, another person roasted it, still others ground it, made it, sold it, and finally, millions of people consumed it.

So coffee is a social beverage. Social in the sense that you could be alone enjoying a cup of coffee, just listening to your
own voices! You could also be with a lover talking about your life. You could be with a best friend talking about politics. Coffee is part of the grease of life, so we have a great respect for it.

But it’s people who make coffee what it is, and that’s the foundation of Starbucks. I mean it’s just what it is. It’s not just Starbucks. I think that almost everything we do, as we were saying last night, revolves around people. At Starbucks, we’re good business people. We are good at what we do. We are also good at human interaction.

We knew that we would have to compete on all different levels. We had to compete for great product, for great coffee, and in the marketplace for money. You have to add resources to grow your business. You have to compete in the marketplace for mind share for people to pay attention to you.

Most of all, you compete in the marketplace for great people. It is the people we hire, who at the end of the day, make the critical difference.

I’d like to tell you there is a magic sauce, but there is no magic formula. It’s just hard work. It’s caring about each other. It’s having big dreams and a willingness to fail; it is an ability to celebrate your failures and move forward.

I’ve been at Starbucks for 19 years. We’ve had lots of changes in computer systems and roasting plants. We bought different coffee and opened shops overseas, but the one thing, the thread that flows all the way through Starbucks, is respect and dignity for each other, and that’s what makes it tick. If you have caring, loving people, they will treat others that way, and others will love to be around them and do business with them.

(VJH): You and your employees also share common values including enthusiasm, which literally means “to be filled with God.”

(HB): Right.

(VJH): I was going to ask you about your achievements in taking Starbucks international. I can imagine it was difficult with different languages and customs, and yet you managed to succeed probably beyond your wildest dreams. How did that work? What were the most difficult parts in taking Starbucks overseas?

(HB): I think the most difficult parts were the learning experiences that we all had to go through and understand the world a little better. When we finally let go, and I mean letting go of what we thought, and just listened and absorbed it all, then it all started to come to us.
I remember trying to learn about cultural differences. I read every book on this culture and that culture, and we had experts come in from Japan, Taiwan, and China to teach us. We had written down and translated all the procedures and the recipes for the things that we needed to do, and the things that you as a franchise operator should do to succeed.

Do you know what it all boiled down to? First, give trust. Second, have a smile on your face. Third, have open ears. And fourth, a caring heart. It didn't make any difference what language we spoke. We were all different, but in the end there was far more that united than divided us. However, we all came together with one common objective, and that was to use Starbucks coffee, which we call our art, to build bridges among people.

If you think about it, you could go anywhere in the world, and you will see people sitting in a Starbucks consuming a cup of coffee, perhaps reading a newspaper or talking to some other person. Everywhere around the globe, it is the same human experience. When we finally understood that lesson and let go of all the things that we had been thinking about all the differences and the cultural rules that we thought we had to follow — it just worked. It all came toward us so fast that we could hardly absorb it all.

(VJH): I think Starbucks provides a great form of public service. Your commitment to make the world a better place is a unique form of entrepreneurial philanthropy.

(HB): Right.

(VJH): I can’t imagine a better group of ambassadors for the United States than the good people who work at Starbucks overseas. What you were able to do with the international division is just absolutely mind bogging. I applaud your work.

I was going to ask that if you had any advice for all the young people of America, what would it be?

(HB): I would advise young people to dream big dreams, and be persistent about achieving them. I would say never ever give up, ever. Figure out who you are, what matters to you, and what fills your soul.

I would advise young people to dream big dreams, and be persistent about achieving them. I would say never ever give up, ever. Figure out who you are, what matters to you, and what fills your soul.

(VJH): I was going to ask about the other end of the age spectrum. What words of wisdom would you give to senior citizens?

(HB): Don’t ever stop giving back. As we get older, our responsibility to help increases. It doesn’t diminish; it’s the opposite of what we think. We think retirement. We think rocking chair or fishing pole. The truth of the matter is, what the world needs and especially our young people need, is leadership. They need positive examples that caring, older people can provide. Retirement is not always fun anyway, so keep on giving. We cannot afford to have our senior citizens sitting on the sidelines.

We will need all the resources and the help we can get to make this world a better place. I would tell older people that the responsibility for the future rests squarely on our shoulders.

(VJH): I couldn’t agree more. You mentioned that you have framed quotes around your office to remind you of certain truths. What comes to mind when I ask if you have any favorites? For me, it is Albert Einstein. “Only a life lived for others is worthwhile.” Do you have anything like that?

(HB): I do. I have a lot. I would like to tell you one or two. One of my favorites comes from Henri Louis Bergson. He said, “Think like a person of action, and act like a person of thought.” This embodies what has been one of the biggest struggles in my life, which is to understand where I am, and the importance of thinking before acting.

My second favourite has its roots in the Bible. I heard its application by Elie Wiesel in a speech. He said, “Thou shall not stand idly by.” For me, this has been a huge driver. It means that we have personal responsibility even for the tiniest, little thing. When there is a piece of paper in the street, somebody has got to pick it up. When you ignore it, you’re standing idly by.

Similarly, when you are walking up the street and there is
somebody begging for money, and you don’t do something to help, you are standing idly by.

I have that quote framed in my office. Consequently, I think about it almost every day of my life. I’m faced with it all the time.

(VJH): I remember reading about Rabbi Hillel saying, “What is hateful to you, do not unto your neighbor; this is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary.” Mother Teresa said that caring was the one-word summary of the Golden Rule that runs through all the great religions. What does caring mean to you?

(HB): Caring is always putting someone else ahead of yourself. In business, it typically translates as providing generous wages and benefits.

But real caring to me is when you go beneath the surface. When the first question out of your mouth isn’t “How was business yesterday?” or “How much money did you make?” but rather, it is “How are you?” How are your children? How is your family? Are things okay?” You have to really want to know and acknowledge that they are human beings, not just employees of the company. We don’t do nearly enough of that in most companies. I should say most organizations because I’m on the board of several non-profits. We don’t do nearly enough of that in most companies. I should say most organizations because I’m on the board of several non-profits. I see the same behavior among the leadership, who are so caught up in themselves and what they are trying to achieve, that they have no idea about the well being of the human beings who make it possible for them to succeed.

(VJH): We’re all interconnected. Voltaire said, “I am part of everyone that I’ve met.” There are so many people that we meet through our lifetime, and they all contribute something.

(HB): Right.

(VJH): I want to ask what is the greatest lesson that you have learned in your lifetime?

While you are thinking about it, I’ll tell you what Mother Teresa said. “You’ve got to love God with your entire heart and soul. You have to love your neighbor as thyself, and love the hole in your heart as much as your heart.”

(HB): That’s pretty good. You don’t beat that one. What comes to mind is something that my administrative assistant said to me when someone found the layoff list on top of the computer. We went through a tough time early on, but hadn’t started talking to people about it yet. All I wanted to do was go crawl into a hole. I asked rhetorically, “God, how can I get out of this?” I was paralyzed with fear.

My assistant said to me, “Howard, only the truth sounds like the truth, so tell them the truth.” It was all so obvious after she said it. The next morning, I called a company meeting and said, “Here it is, and I’m sorry. But we have learned our lesson. From now on, we’re going to tell you the whole truth. You are going to know what is going on.” Only the truth sounds like the truth. I’ve tried to live by that every day.

(VJH): I have heard you tell a wonderful story about how you and Howard Schultz responded to the first gentleman in your company who had AIDS. Both you and Howard said he could work as long as he wanted, and after he could no longer work, you promised to keep paying his medical bills forever.

(HB): Right.

(VJH): What a lesson. Imagine if we ran our country that way.

(HB): Why wouldn’t we? It’s ludicrous that we don’t.

(VJH): The principles are the same.

(HB): Yes.

(VJH): Whether you’re talking about politics or about business, we are all human beings, and it’s about how we treat each other.

(HB): The oddest thing is that some of us believe that it’s a zero-sum game in order to do that, in order for us to take care of Jim who had AIDS, somehow on the other end of the spectrum, something is going to be lost. We’re going to have less money, or we can’t do it for everybody, or whatever it happens to be. And it’s just not at all like that. It’s the opposite of that.

By doing what we did for Jim with AIDS, we set in motion a whole chain of events that we weren’t even thinking about it. We were just trying to care about Jim, and that set into motion throughout the organization, a complete understanding of what it means to care for another human being. We had been given a test, and our people said that we passed it with flying colors.

(VJH): It became a defining moment for your company.

(HB): Yes, it was a defining moment. No question about it.

(VJH): Absolutely. Most of us dream of being heroes. I’m thinking of the lesson in the book, Lord Jim. We keep waiting for that second when we can rescue a damsel in distress, ignoring the opportunity to be heroes in small ways, several times a day.

(HB): Right.

(VJH): The last question that I want to ask is, how you would like to be remembered?

(HB): I want to be remembered as a great husband, a great
father, and a fantastic grandfather. At the end of the day, that is all that matters. I went to a close friend’s funeral recently, and I watched his three daughters get up and talk about their father. I still have the funeral pamphlet next to my desk. Fortunately, he knew he was dying, so his daughters had time to let him know they loved him. There is nothing I value more in life than to have the love and respect of those I love.

(VJH): It doesn’t get any better than that.

(HB): It’s pretty simple stuff when you really think about it.

(VJH): Just to close out this interview is there anything you would like to add that was not particularly prompted by a question?

(HB): No, except to say, I believe that the walls of any organization talk. This organization’s walls talk. What you have here at Home Care & Hospice and the Caring Institute, is extraordinarily special. The room where I spoke was so filled with passion and energy that it just gave me energy. I was nervous before I spoke. I usually am not so nervous when I’m talking to Starbucks’ employees or Gap employees, or others.

I came here not knowing quite what to expect. I went out and met a few people before I spoke. Their warmth and humanity just shone through them and this entire organization. I perceived it as a very strong light. I want to say I appreciated the welcome I received. I appreciated the caring. I appreciated the opportunity to share what I have learned. I appreciated the dinner we shared last night. It was so fascinating. I’m coming away feeling like I have had my battery charged. I want to thank you for the experience.

(VJH): Thank you, Howard, I return the compliment. You did a great job. We look forward to the publication of your book. Your story and that of Starbucks is such an inspiration to all of us. You can and should do it right both in life and in business. They aren’t different.

(HB): They are the same, and it is all about the people, and how you treat them.

(VJH): Well, we love and respect you very much. I think we got that message across to you.

(HB): Yes, you did.

(VJH): Thank you for your time.

(HB): Thank you, Val.

“Great men are they who see that the spiritual is stronger than any material force and that thought rules the world.”

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Progress comes from caring more about what needs to be done than about who gets the credit.”

–Dorothy Height
This year marks the 15th anniversary of the creation of the Frederick Douglass Museum and Hall of Fame for Caring Americans which opened in December of 1992 to coincide with the National Caring Awards Ceremony of that year.

The facility is located at 320 A Street, NE, Washington, DC, a short three blocks from the U.S. Capitol and one block east of the U.S. Supreme Court.

The museum is housed in what was the first Washington, DC, home of Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist leader, orator, author, publisher, diplomat, and statesman. Douglass lived in the home from 1871 through 1877. Since then, the building had changed hands many times, until 1963 when Warren Robbins arranged its purchase and created the first Museum of African Art in Washington. Slowly, Robbins acquired the adjacent buildings and garages behind them that once were carriage houses. In all, nine buildings were fused together with passages opened between the townhouses. Temporary walls were constructed out of plywood and covered with muslin that formed the backdrop for exhibits.

The Smithsonian Museum acquired this property and the African Art Museum in the early 1970s and added an addition on to the back of the Douglass home, which initially was a duplex located at 318 and 320 A Street, N.E. As a result, the Smithsonian created one building with more than 10,000 square feet of gallery space. The remainder of the buildings were connected at the level of their second floors and used for office space.
When Congress built a new Museum of African Art on the Mall, it required the Smithsonian to sell this Capitol Hill property in order to offset expenses. The National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC) agreed to purchase this property in 1986, initially with the idea of locating its offices there. This was based on the representation that under the District of Columbia zoning regulations, buildings over 10,000 square feet, even in this historic district that is primarily residential, could be used for offices by non-profit organizations simply by filing a letter of intent with the Board of Zoning.

The facts turned out otherwise, and faced with a protracted court battle or losing its substantial down payment, NAHC agreed to go through with the purchase in 1989. NAHC also agreed to let the museum be used by the Caring Institute, whose mission it is to honor those individuals that have devoted their lives in order to serve others.

It took three years, but the museum was lovingly restored to its 1870s appearance, thanks to the hard work of dozens of volunteers who donated time and materials. Today, the museum is a permanent memorial to goodness and an intellectual and spiritual oasis located in the heart of the Nation's Capitol.

Each year, recipients of the National Caring Awards have been inducted into the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans, and their portraits and stories are on display therein.

President Bill Clinton toured the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans in 1999.

The first Washington, DC home of Frederick Douglass was lovingly restored. It has become the preferred gathering place on Capitol Hill honoring Douglass and Mother Teresa, who inspired the museum and others of their spirit.

Former House Speaker, Dennis Hastert (R-III) spoke at the Museum in 2003. He is shown here being introduced by former House Republican Leader Bob Michael.
Visitors to the museum have access to Douglass memorabilia donated by the National Park Service and the Smithsonian Institute. They can view videotaped interviews with the Caring Award winners. These videos have also been distributed to schools, universities, and television stations.

In addition to honoring the most caring adults in America as chosen by a secret ballot vote of the Institute’s Board of Trustees, the museum honors the most caring young adults in the United States every year. Moreover, a number of international winners have been enshrined there including: Mother Teresa, whose example inspired the Caring Institute; Glenn Kielty, the generous engineer and developer, who donated most of Mother Teresa’s buildings; Claes Nobel, whose work on behalf of the environment is as legendary as his name; and Jane Goodall, the renowned primatologist.

In addition to the portraits and stories of the Caring Award winners, the museum features winners of the Art of Caring Poster and Photography Contests. The Institute awards art depicting caring, which is the work of students in grades K through 12.

Because of its proximity to the U.S. Capitol, its elegant appearance, its state of the art catering kitchen, its combination of open usable space, and a courtyard that can be tented to accommodate up to 1,000 people, makes the museum very much in demand. It has been used regularly by religious, community, and political organizations for board meetings, receptions, dinners, weddings, and seminars. The museum has also been used as a setting for movies and television programs.

The Caring Institute, which manages this property, has received kudos for preserving this building that is such an important part of American history. In the years to come it will increasingly be a mandatory stop for tourists visiting Washington, DC. The building will, in the words of Frederick Douglass, continue to “teach the people the sacredness of human rights and the brotherhood of man.”

For more information on the Caring Institute or to schedule an event at the Frederick Douglass Museum, visit www.caring.org or call 202-547-4273.
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Mother Teresa who inspired the Caring Institute said that caring was “the one word summary of the Golden Rule, which runs through all the great religions of the world.” She added that there was today, a “poverty of the spirit” in the U.S. and the developed world, which was “worse than the poverty of the body common to the Third World.” She directed us to do something about this problem, and the result in 1985 was the creation of the Caring Institute.

It does seem that America has always been conflicted. On the one hand, we do value self-reliance and flinty independence. On the other hand, we realize the importance of community and as Jefferson, Lincoln, and Martin Luther King have taught us, that the purpose of life is to serve others and do good. At times we favor the material side and at other times, the spiritual side of life.

President Theodore Roosevelt made the case that we need and should nourish both side of our national psyche. He said, “It seems to me that the great lesson to be taught to our people is the lesson both of brotherhood and self-help. In our special ways, each of us must preserve our sturdy independence; and yet each must realize his duty to others. And each who performs his duty, in whatever way, must be given a full measure of respect.”

Others have criticized America for our emphasis on materialism—that is, the drive to acquire material possessions rather than to serve others. Once again, the answer is that both values are important. We need to reward industry and the drive to produce products, as well as valuing serving others. A former Caring Award recipient, Dr. Joe Greer, put this in context for us when he said, “There is nothing wrong with working very hard to earn a Porsche as long as you use it to drive very fast to serve the poor.”

Senator Frank E. Moss, the founding Chairman of the Caring Institute, made the point that America was out of balance because we have overemphasized the rewards and minimized the importance of service. If one is to be greater than the other, then society he said should err on the side over-accenting service. He put it this way: “Whether for the nation, for the individual, or for the corporation, self is best served by transcending self.”

Service or caring is really love in action. The best definition we know comes from Victor Hugo who said: “Love is the ultimate recognition that we give to superbly held values.” In this sense, love is connected to the Hindu word “Namaste”, which roughly translated means, “I honor the divinity in you.”

Hillel was the foremost rabbi of the first century BC. The story goes that he was challenged to teach the Torah, the first six books of the Old Testament generally believed to be written by Moses while standing on one foot. The rabbi said: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the entire Torah; all the rest is commentary.” Four and a half centuries earlier, Confucius said: “What you do not want done to your self, do not do to others.”

All this takes us back to the beginning, to Mother Teresa whose penetrating words of wisdom tied caring and the golden rule together. The lives of the men and women in this magazine inspire us all to be our best, and redouble our efforts to help each other. Working together, we can help America preserve its place as the most caring nation in the history of the world.
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