

Parent Pause

DC Wave Swim Team

November 18, 2010

A Time to Give

It's something about the holiday season that always brings out the best in folks.....OK, I'll speak for myself.....something about the holiday season always brings out the generosity in me. Having spent many years in non-profit management in Washington, DC I know there are many in the area who are in need. Unfortunately the media and our own personal perceptions lead us to believe that only the poorest of the poor need assistance. But what about the family who is living from pay check to pay check, the family who is financially strapped because of medical bills or prescription costs, the elderly couple who lives in your neighborhood who has a limited income, or the family whose head of the household was recently impacted by a lay-off? They may need help too!

Some of my fondest childhood memories were during the holiday when my Mother would bake holiday goodies, crochet an extra scarf, pick up an extra set of gloves while shopping for gifts, or just practice a random act of kindness for someone else. One year when I was about 12 we were headed from the mall and it was extremely cold! I grew up in Newark, NJ and we'd often travel via car to the mall in Livingston, NJ. The mall was not that far from our home but I remember there was only 1 bus line that went from Newark to the mall and it did not run very often. On our way out the mall this particular year there was a woman with her child (about 4 years old) standing on the bus stop and it had started to snow. The woman had on a coat and hat and the child had a snow suit on but they looked very cold, she had a lot of bulky bags, and the bus was nowhere in sight. We were waiting in the car at the traffic light and I saw my mother's gaze fixated on the child. I knew she was going to do something but I had no idea what. You see my mother was a teacher, a Girl Scout leader, a Cub Scout leader, a friend, and a confidant to many. So I knew she could not just drive by - it wasn't in her nature. As the light turned green she pulled up to the bus stop and asked the woman where she was going. Of course the woman was hesitant but clearly something about my mother's genuine care and concern lead her to let her guard down and talk to my mother. My mom offered the woman and her child a ride (the woman was 2 buses away from home and it was getting dark!). She told the woman that it was too cold for the child to be out without any gloves on (I remember thinking that it was more than just not having on gloves!). Still sensing some hesitancy my Mother said to the woman "I know what its like to stand on a bus stop with my child in the cold. Please let me at least take you half way home so you have time to warm up before waiting for the next bus". The woman smiled and got in the car with us and allowed my mother to take her all the way home. When we got to her house my mother got out the car, helped her with her daughter and her bags, and she went in the trunk of the car and gave the woman another bag with items she'd initially purchased for herself: a set of long johns, a hat and scarf set, a pack of tube socks, and a pair of mittens. The woman gave my mother a hug and kept thanking her. When my Mom got back in the car I asked why she gave the stuff that she bought for herself to the woman and she simply said: "Because she needs to be warm the next time she takes the bus and all of the stuff she purchased was for her daughter, she needed a gift too!"

Now I am not suggesting that you give a stranger a ride but I am suggesting that you consider others this holiday season. Invite a neighbor who can't be with family next week over for Thanksgiving dinner, pick up an extra pair of gloves and give them to the gentleman who always offers to pump your gas in exchange for money, buy a \$5 gift card to Dunkin Donuts and give it to a homeless person, buy an extra turkey and give it to someone - just because! The best lessons parents teach in life are taught when you aren't really trying to teach. A simple act of kindness can leave a lasting impression on your child - as in my story above. Here are some upcoming ways to involve your swimmer in the gift of giving!

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- Those 9 and under swimmers who are participating in the **Pilgrim Pentathlon**. Curl Burke (the sponsoring team) is asking all teams to participate in a food drive that will assist the **Loudoun Interfaith Relief**. They have asked us to collect canned meat, i.e. Spaghetti O's, Chef Boyardee products, tuna, etc. in cans. Every swimmer who brings a canned meat product will be given a raffle ticket for prizes that will be donated by our team dealers, Underwater Wear, Sports Fair, and Aardvark Swim and Sport. If you forget your "canned donation", you can make a cash donation or check (\$5.00) to Loudoun Interfaith Relief (www.loudouninterfaithrelief.org), and your swimmer will receive a raffle ticket. Challenge your swimmer to go through the kitchen cabinets and look for items that can be donated, pack them up and deliver them when they go to the meet this weekend.
- The Turkey Claus Showdown meet, December 3 - 5, is an official partner of the DC Area Toys for Tots program and they are asking EVERY participating swimmer to donate 1 NEW toy for children in need in the area. Swimmers can donate the toy at the meet!!
- If you are unable to participate in either of these ask your swimmer what they'd like to do for someone else this season.....I am sure they have some great ideas.

In this season of thanksgiving lets be thankful for all that we have, no matter how small. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

See You at the Pool!

Rhonda