So, Thinking About Getting Involved, Are You?

There is no single path to getting involved in what I will call “community service," or “community activism." Community service, community activism, or even community organizing, call it what you want; all it really amounts to is getting together with people with whom you have something in “common," people who have similar goals or interests, and working to accomplish those goals.

Unless you’ve been raised by wolves, you have had human interaction since childhood. Some people find themselves involved in their community through local fire departments, or veterans groups, or church groups, helping others through fund raising or direct assistance, such as food drives. We may become involved through our children; when they become involved in sports or the arts, we necessarily become involved too.

But we humans do not always stay in one place. When you move to another community, you may often times have to start anew with relationships: a new job, a new school, a new church congregation. If you are lucky, you settle into a community that is welcoming. And sometimes, you find that, for example, your child’s school has a Parent Teacher Organization, through which you learn about the school’s Board of Education, and suddenly you’re being asked to run for a position on the School Board. When that happens, someone has probably recognized that you have what are called “leadership skills." Congratulations. And such skills are often transferable.

It is not necessary that you have a lot of experience in a particular area in order to join the ranks of the involved. A little self-confidence certainly helps some. I know a guy that wasn’t involved in public politics at all; then he decided to get involved, and rode an escalator all the way to the Presidency of the United States. By the way, his predecessor to that office, Barack Obama, included “community organizer” on his resume and it seemed to work for him.

As much as self-confidence can be helpful, it is really a desire to contribute to the greater good that should be high on the list of reasons to get involved. This subject was discussed in an earlier essay in this section of the website. If you’ve been jumping ahead in this set of essays, go back to *A Brief Essay on Community Volunteerism* for more on the subject and to help you sort things out.

You don’t have to run for President, whether of the United States or the local School Board; you don’t even have to be political—although you will come to understand that almost every human interaction is political in one way or another. You just have to be human, and care. And, as Molly Ivins wrote in her little pep talk on the opening page of this Commentary section of the website (go back and check it out; it’s inspiring), “You have more…power than 99 per cent of the people who have ever lived on this planet. It is an obligation that requires attention and effort. And on top of that, you should make it a hell of a lot of fun.”

So get involved. Exercise some of that power. Have some fun. The Sprague Democratic Town Committee is looking forward to welcoming you and helping you to reach your potential.

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