

Paying It Forward A Little Bit: Homeless

Desiring to have a more direct experience for my charitable contributions, I've moved away from giving to large, corporate style charities and devised my own version of sharing, which I call, Guerilla Giving, so I could feel I had more direct impact on where my efforts went. Putting this into action a few of my projects went like this.

On the fringes of the burgeoning downtown center of San Diego, lies a huge and very expensive baseball stadium called PETCO Park. Before it was this cathedral to sports, the place was the Bowery, Skid Row...the place where large numbers of homeless and dispossessed called home.

So every Sunday morning at sunrise, I drove down to this area and handed out food, blankets and money to those lying on the bare sidewalk or living in cardboard boxes. I did this for one year, without fail, every Sunday morning. This was my Church. Some mornings I took dozens of hand made sandwiches and baskets of fruit. Other times, I purchased large quantities of sandwiches or burritos from a restaurant. On one occasion, I took over a dozen new sleeping bags I'd purchased from Wal Mart and gave these to the worst in need.

The following year around the Holidays, I had the idea to buy a bunch of Greeting Cards, which I filled out with this simple statement: I Believe in You! Love, Gary, and placed some

money in each envelope. I then walked around and handed one out to every apparently homeless looking person I could find.

I then took the remaining cards to a nearby Women's Shelter in the area, and gave the rest of the cards to the ladies in the lobby.

I had one card left as I was leaving, and noticed a woman, standing in a building vestibule by herself on that cold winter morning, wearing worn, soiled clothing, but she had a certain sparkle in her eyes that spoke to me.

I walked up to her, greeted her saying: How are you doing, sweetheart? And then I gave her my last card. As I walked away, I turned around to see her looking down at the card and then up at me. Moved by my feelings, I went back to her and noticed she had tears in her eyes, and so I asked her if I could give her a hug, to which she agreed. We shared a great moment together in that vestibule: one of most memorable hugs, ever! I will always remember that time with fondness in my heart and hope that she is doing well, wherever she may be.

Gary Walker