A Wave of Compassion

“It is the greatest wave of compassion this organization has ever experienced.” - The American Red Cross

The brightest star on the horizon of recent events is the supernova of generosity and volunteerism that grew out of our compassion for the people who died in the attacks of September 11. People with no tangible connection to the World Trade Center or Pentagon were moved to action, giving money, blood or time to relieve others’ suffering. Within hours, millions tried to donate blood. Within weeks, the outpouring of aid stunned relief groups. Donations soared to more than a billion dollars.

Musicians and movie stars raised hundreds of millions of dollars with a New York concert for firefighters, and with a national telethon for victims’ families -- A Tribute to Heroes -- simulcast on every commercial network, commercial-free. Much more will be raised from holiday sales of the new double disk CD recording of the telethon.

Many corporations donated tens of millions of dollars each to victim funds. Most notably, a foundation of the Tribune Co. helped raise $16 million, even while the media company posted a loss of $139 million for the third quarter. Another company losing money that still gave generously was AmTrak. They helped thousands of stranded passengers by honoring airline tickets on trains leaving San Francisco. And the Vermont Teddy Bear Co. created a “Cards of Compassion” campaign to donate 558 teddy bears to families of firefighters, police and rescue workers. The

(Continued on page 5)

Forgiving the Unforgivable

Why would Peter and Linda Biehl, a wealthy, conservative Newport Beach couple, leave their privileged community for South Africa to work arm in arm with former radical leftists to bring jobs and opportunity to disadvantaged blacks? Because it is the place where their daughter Amy, a 26 year-old blue-eyed blonde valedictorian from Stanford, was stoned and stabbed to death in 1993.

“In all the world this is the one place Amy feels most alive to us,” said Linda.

They have taken to heart their daughter’s conviction: To get to the root of apartheid’s sins, society needs to address the poverty and the hopelessness in people’s every day lives.

For the last seven years, the Biehls have committed themselves to building housing, schools, and golf courses for the same community where Amy drew her last breath. With a small group of volunteers they have raised money for scholar-
On September 11, a million Good Samaritans were inspired to generosity, kindness and helpfulness. In turn, we were inspired by them.

After the attacks, Don Forman, a used car dealer in Las Vegas, heard on the radio the plight of stranded travelers who could not get home to their families. There were no bus or train tickets. No rental cars.

Business was slow at Forman's United Nissan, so he decided to help. He rented passenger vans and called the media. He was offering a ride to anyone stranded in airports who needed to get home. For free. By the end of the day, 150 people were back at home in Southern California.

The word spread through hotels, rental car counters and casinos. By the second day Don Forman had to charter buses. He galvanized his 147 employees to shuttle more than 900 stranded souls back home to California.

He spent $8,000 of his own money but credited his employees for organizing the fleet, and the mayor's office and dozens of businesses for donating food, money and time.

Forman recalled, “The dealership was just like everyone else in the country. We all stood around with our mouths open. We didn’t know what to do. When we started doing this, my employees were ecstatic. They really felt a part of something.”

After the last piece of baggage was loaded onto each bus -- Forman even schlepped bags -- and after each passenger was given two bottles of water, Forman would climb up and stand next to the driver to bid them farewell and a safe trip home.

“Everybody just applauded,” said Irv Hamilton of Alameda, California. “I can imagine this sort of thing in the Midwest, but... you don’t think of Las Vegas as being particularly hospitable.”

Now, you do. And car dealers too.

Geraldine

from the editor...

Within days of the unforgettable attacks in New York and Washington, it became clear to me that on the heels of the tremendous misery of these events would come a tremendous volume of good. Heroes are only born of crisis. Resurrection only comes after death. Love shines most gloriously when it comforts the lonely and the suffering. I’m sorry there has to be so much suffering, but I am also grateful for the compassion that has been born. This Thanksgiving -- and Christmas, Hanukkah and Ramadan -- most of us will find much to be thankful for.

The world has united around this event. It was said by a woman in France, “We are all Americans today.” The incidence of terrorism around the globe had been steadily declining for a decade. I believe the heightened appreciation for innocent life will strengthen that trend.

Another woman asked why we didn’t feel similar feelings of shock and urgency when 100,000 people in Turkey were killed in a recent earthquake. Or why do we not feel the anguish when innocents around the world are bombed? Are American lives more important? Governments are discovering that as we help to feed, clothe, immunize, and educate poor people in Africa and the Middle East, we dry up the well of despair from which terrorism’s gardens are watered. And we can be heroes.

I offer to my readers a map leading them to a treasure of positive news that will quench their thirst for hope. If they allow these stories to abide with them -- instead of the fears fed by their imaginary thoughts of ‘what if’-- daily life will not simply become normal again, but better.

I am enclosing a gift, a parable I wrote a few days after 9-11 inspired by Joseph Campbell’s Power of Myth. I do hope you enjoy it.

Feast your hearts on these pages. And be grateful. There will be no room left for fear.

Andreas Schmitz, a German man, received a lottery ticket as a wedding gift. It turned out to be a winner, worth a million marks.

Instead of keeping the money, spending it on a fancy honeymoon, he donated it all to a dance company that was in financial straits. The dancers had performed at his wedding.

The 40-year-old businessman said he was giving the lottery win to the dance troupe -- who had disbanded -- to help reestablish a resident company in Cologne. Mr. Schmitz says he's already been lucky in life and he felt his new fortune came with an obligation. “If I win again, I’ll donate that money too.”

Story tip submitted by Amy Grant.
Parents Forgive (From page 1)

ships, museums, music training programs, and adult literacy projects. They’ve opened bakeries, a print shop, and a construction company that vies for large contracts, giving jobs to men and women who live in the squalid townships set aside for blacks during the reign of apartheid.

“The Biehls came just when we needed them most,” said a seamstress who for years had to struggle to make a living selling her tapestries until the Biehls helped her with marketing. “Losing their daughter like they did, I cannot imagine what that pain must feel like. But from that one horrible moment, so much light has come into the world, so much good.”

But it is the forgiveness the Biehls demonstrate for Amy’s killers that is most amazing. Jon Jeter of the Washington Post describes it this way: Theirs is not a story for cynics. It is about redemption and transformation. To South Africans, the Biehls have offered their help. To Amy’s killers, they have offered not just absoluto but friendship, taking them to the movies or dinner just as casually as they would an old friend. And from the deepest hurt anyone can know, they have exhumed an unimaginable peace and a stirring sense of purpose.

Easy Nofomela and Ntobeko Peni, along with two other young men, were convicted of Amy’s slaying. They were part of a mob incited by a political rally to kill whites. Four years ago, they asked for amnesty from South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which set international precedent, finding a way to heal a nation bitterly divided by freeing prisoners who demonstrate a political motive for their crimes and who testify fully and truthfully.

The Biehls have become close friends and co-workers with the two.

“I know this sounds strange, but the one place I really feel Amy’s spirit is with Easy and Peni.”

“We call them mother and father now,” Peni said. “I don’t know how they found it in their hearts to forgive us, but I can tell you that it has greatly enriched my life. I will never forget what we did that night, but I will also never forget the kindness they have shown me when they had every reason to hate me.”

The Biehls often are asked how they could forgive such horrendous acts. “We have seen that to hate, to want revenge, to be angry consumes a tremendous amount of energy, all of it negative, and time, all of it nonproductive. It is completely selfish,” reasons Peter. “As Christians -- we’ve taught high school Sunday school -- we would be heretics if we now did anything other than to forgive. And finally, it is completely liberating. We can forgive, move forward, and we’re at peace with ourselves.”

Donate musical instruments, golf clubs (for youth lessons), or money: www.amybiehl.org Tel: (760) 771-2044

Irish Peace Breakthrough

The Good Friday Peace process in Northern Ireland was collapsing. David Trimble, who won the Nobel Peace Prize and was elected the first minister of the fragile new government there, resigned in disgust. Britain threatened to pull the plug from the power-sharing experiment that brought home rule to the war-weary Protestants and Catholics. Then, on October 23 the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced the long-awaited disposal of a significant amount of the paramilitary group’s weapons and an independent international disarmament commission confirmed that guns, ammunition, and explosives were extinguished.

Trimble, long beleaguered over the arms impasse, smiled broadly after seeing the proof: “This is the day we were told would never happen.”

Within hours of the move, the IRA’s opponent reciprocated with its own concessions. The British government will begin the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland and is demolishing two military observation towers and dismantling two other facilities in the region. Britain called the IRA’s move “unprecedented and genuinely historic, taking the peace process to a new level.”

Trimble was restored as leader of the majority Protestant government. Catholics, including Sinn Fein, the IRA representative, joined him to continue hammering out a lasting peace within a representative government.

Good Politics, Good Policy

The U.S. extended free trade status to Jordan, a key Middle East ally. Jordan becomes only the fourth nation -- after Canada, Mexico, and Israel -- to enjoy a tariff-free partnership with the U.S. Significantly, it is the first trade agreement to include worker, environmental and intellectual property rights protection.

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When U.S. airspace was closed on 9-11, Delta flight 15 and 52 other airplanes from all over the world were diverted to New Foundland. Under the direction of the Red Cross, the small town of Gander and surrounding communities sent convoys of school buses to ferry 10,500 stranded passengers to high schools, meeting halls, and lodges where they found cots, or mats with sleeping bags and pillows. Families were kept together. The elderly were taken to private homes. Women's-only facilities were made available. High school kids worked to take care of the “plane people”.

Stranded passengers were offered phone calls and e-mails once a day. All were offered a choice of excursions to boat on lakes and harbors, or to visit forests. Bakeries baked fresh bread. Food was either delivered, or eateries served it up. Tokens to laundromats were offered. Every need was met. The Red Cross knew where to shuttle them back for re-boarding.

A flight attendant recalls, “When passengers reboarded, it was like they had been on a cruise. They were swapping stories, impressing each other with who had the better time. Our flight to Atlanta looked like a party. The passengers had totally bonded and were calling each other by their first names, exchanging phone numbers and addresses. Then, one of our business passengers stood up and stated he would like to do something for the town of Lewisporte. He wanted to set up a trust fund under the name DELTA 15 to provide college scholarships for their high school students. He asked for donations. When the paper came back with names, phone numbers, and addresses, it totaled $14,500!” The gentleman, who was a Virginia doctor, said he would ask Delta headquarters to donate. He promised to match each donation and start the fund’s administration.
company collected 150,000 messages of love and hope from people all over the country. Then they printed, and delivered the bounty of messages and bears with the help of Federal Express. An author of one of the cards admits, “When I left my own personal message for someone, I cried as I felt the love and energy that I was sharing would help another in some small way.” New Yorkers are recovering with the help of their mayor and their governor who enlisted the highly profitable internet company, E-Bay, in the local aid effort. From now until the year’s end, Auction for America is offering a free forum -- on E-Bay -- for sellers, participating companies, and celebrities to auction goods and services with full sales price donated to victims. Many U.S. Congressmen have donated themselves -- to act as chef, artist, tour guide or dinner host for winners. 

Carolin and Gary Brouillard own a restaurant in Maine known for the dollar bills that cover their cathedral ceiling. They decided to take the money down and give it to the family of one of the workers lost in the Windows of the World restaurant atop the World Trade Center. They found messages on the internet from the wife and sister of ‘James’, the elevator operator who brought diners to the restaurant. They learned that he had a tattoo and an earring and, “He’s so lovable”. James’ family tried to refuse the money when they received Carolin’s offer over the telephone. But, when they got to know each other -- and cried together -- they realized it was meant to be. “James and his wife came to Maine every year, and they loved to eat lobster.”

For 11 years restaurant patrons had attached money to the ceiling. It totaled $12,313. Later, said Carolin, “An amazing thing started to happen. We went to the post office and opened a letter. A dollar bill was in there from a guy in New York we didn’t even know saying it was such a great thing we did, and he wanted to start the fund over. Then another letter, there were two dollars and on them was written, 9-11-01. And then we got more mail yesterday and today. Little bits of it are starting to come back.”

Children are experiencing the satisfaction of giving, some for the first time. Students at Borman Elementary in Texas donated pennies saved for seven years to build a new playground -- and they had just reached their goal. Two lemonade stands in Northern Virginia suburbs each amassed donations of over $600.

Even people who had little to give were moved to action by the light of their own compassion. Residents of Grace House homeless shelter in Savannah, Georgia gathered what they could and proudly sent a check for $11,000 so far. Inmates of California’s Institute for Women are sending hand-sewn quilts and thousands in cash. “It makes us feel part of America, too. We’ve been part of the problem, now we want to be part of the solution.”

Volunteer service is infusing shaken Americans with a powerful sense of community. Inquiries by young people to the national service program, AmeriCorps, are up 30% since 9-11. Involvement in charities of all sorts has spiked. Calls to New York Cares have doubled. People are helping others through professional groups, as well. New York cab drivers continue to offer free rides to relief workers and volunteers laboring at the disaster site. “We will do it as long as it is needed.” Florists have donated flowers for funerals. Thousands of mental health counselors worldwide have signed up to offer free psychological services to families and to workers at disaster sites. The Association of Trial Lawyers has offered free legal representation for families applying to the government for compensation.
BRITISH COLUMBIA - A consumer write-in campaign led by environmentalists against Home Depot, Lowe’s and other wood retailers across North America, culminated in the largest rainforest conservation measure in North American history, permanently protecting 1.5 million acres of Canada’s Great Bear Rainforest from logging.

CALIFORNIA - Blue Whales are being spotted in record numbers. Hundreds of these huge mammals spent the summer near Channel Islands National Park in Southern CA and the Cordell Banks area of San Francisco.

MEXICO CITY - 1990 air quality laws have reduced the city’s air pollution to lower than international safety norms almost every day. Plus, the city is unveiling a 10-year plan to require exhaust spewing trucks to meet the same strict rules imposed on cars.

MOROCCO - More than 160 countries signed a new global warming treaty requiring about 40 industrialized countries to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by an average of 5.2% below 1990 levels by 2012. The US will not participate. US CO₂ emissions jumped by 3.1% in 2000, most since 1995.

GUATEMALA - The US will donate $11 million to help protect Guatemala’s rivers, volcanos, and jungles, like the jungle housing the ancient Mayan city of Tikal.

CAIRO - Six of the world’s smoggiest cities will benefit from new fuel-cell powered buses provided by a five-year, $60 million program by the Global Environment Facility. 46 buses powered by fuel cells will serve Mexico City, Sao Paolo, New Delhi, Shanghai, Beijing, and Cairo with public transportation that doesn’t pollute the air. An average car emits over 3 tons of CO₂ each year.

BOLIVIA - The Bolivian government designated three wetlands totalling 17,760 square miles -- an area larger than Switzerland -- as a Gift to the Earth. Their decision is a commitment to conservation, a wiser use of resources, and careful screening of development projects. The wetlands are linked to the Amazon basin and are home to hundreds of threatened species of plants and animals.

GREAT LAKES - The world’s largest freshwater system is purifying itself. As chemicals in the air drop, the lakes are allowed to outgas toxins into the atmosphere. Since 1992, the lakes have exhaled tons of PCBs and pesticides, surprisingly, at twice the rate of intake.

The House voted Nov. 3 to ban new oil and gas drilling under the lakes until September 2003 while environmental impact is assessed.

ANTARCTICA - Scientists report that the ozone hole over Antarctica -- roughly the size of North America -- has stopped growing and is about 10 percent smaller than last year’s record size. As pollution by CFC’s declines, researchers predict a slow recovery of the ozone that shields the planet from damaging UV radiation.

INDONESIA - Four rare new baby rhinos were born in the wild on the island of Java in the past two years. They boost a population of fewer than 60 Javan Rhinos in the world and indicate a hopeful future for growth. None are in captivity.

East Asian ministers pledged to crack down on illegal logging and trading at the first ever forestry conference organized by the World Bank.
About the Good News Network

The Mission    Instead of being balanced, we will offer only one side- the side you rarely get from news today- the positive side. The views of society need uplifting to offset the daily barrage of negative images. The news media needs a reorientation toward news of the Good Samaritan and the Good Congress-man to fairly reflect society today. We’ll shatter stereotypes, feature solutions, and stand on common ground. If it’s glorifying, if it’s “Good Deeds”, it leads! Visit the Web Site for more news to enthuse...

www.goodnewsnetwork.org

The Movement    Feature articles in Whole Life Times, Well Being Journal, American Journalism Review, Newsday, Woman’s World, and the Washington Post, and a prominent position in Yahoo!’s Web directory has led to ever-expanding audiences both on the internet and for this newsletter, which is now sent to 17 states and three countries.

Your Contribution    YOU are invited to contribute articles, essays, photos and ideas to help us prove there is an eagerness for good news in all of us.

Thank You    To Jim Corbley for invaluable editing assistance and creative input.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: This print newsletter was discontinued in 2003, but the Good News Network still publishes positive news online every day at GNN.org. We still offer this 2001 edition as a free download to commemorate the kindness following 9/11.

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Dear Dad,

We are somewhere out to sea, still with little direction as to what our next priority is. We have spent every day since the attacks going back and forth within imaginary boxes drawn in the ocean, standing high-security watches, and trying to make the best of our time. Being isolated as we are, I don't think we appreciate the full scope of what is happening back home, but we are definitely feeling the effects.

About two hours ago we got a call from the LUTJENS (D185), a German warship that was moored ahead of us on the pier in England. While in port, the CHURCHILL and the LUTJENS got together for a sports day/cookout on our fantail, and we made some pretty good friends. Now at sea they called over requesting to pass us close up to say good-bye. The Captain told the crew to come topside to wish them farewell. As they were making their approach, our Conning Officer announced through her binoculars that they were flying an American flag.

As they came even closer, we saw that it was flying at half-mast. They had made a sign to display on the side that read, "We Stand By You". The entire crew of the German ship were manning the rails, saluting, in their dress blues.

More than a few of us fought to retain our composure as they stayed alongside us for a few minutes and we cut our salutes. It was probably the most powerful thing I have seen in my entire life.

The German Navy did an incredible thing for this crew. It's amazing to think that only a half-century ago things were quite different. And to see the unity being demonstrated throughout the world makes us all proud to be out here doing our job.

After the ship pulled away the Officer of the Deck turned to me and said "I'm staying Navy." I'll write more as I know when I'll be home.

Love you guys...

You may be deceived if you trust too much, but you will live in torment if you don't trust enough. -Frank Crane

I have imagined a future where every citizen gets a dose of positive news every day.