

From the Office of the Sheriff:

As we begin to get our heads above water we must recognize the hundreds of volunteers, businesses, and organizations that have given much of their time to help others in need. Strangers, helping strangers. Whether you were sandbagging, feeding the sand baggers, cleaning a neighbor's basement, donating materials, or providing a warm bed for a displaced family, I commended you. I know all of you are sore from your toils but also feel proud of your effort as you should be. It is during these major disasters that we find endless volunteers that are willing to help. The question is – Should it take a disaster to motivate us to volunteer?

Last Saturday I was up early, enjoying a cup of coffee and reading the Citizen when I heard the sound of slamming car doors. As I peered out the window I noted several people in the neighborhood park each accompanied by a shovels, hoe's, or rake. The park had been a bit unsightly as the weeds had overtaken the bark bedding and in need of cleanup. I walked over to see who was brave enough for this undertaking and quickly recognized them as members of the Living Hope Community Church of Fox Lake.

The members stated they were on a mission - literally. They were the crew that was going to beautify the cities parks while other congregation members were doing roadside cleanup. The weeds made for tough work and I thought a good John Deere Rotor-Tiller would provide the critical support needed for this project. So off I went retrieved the tiller and an hour later the play ground looked like new. No time to slough off, we loaded up the tools and drove across town to the next park. Within four hours, four parks/play areas were refurbished and made safer for our children to play in. Twelve people, volunteers, doing the work that would otherwise need to be done by one or two city workers.

They group then mentioned a painting crew they had working as well. Curious, I asked them what they were painting and they stated a house. Yes, a work crew from the church selected a home in need of exterior paint and an owner that needed assistance and they painted the whole house over the weekend. I was very impressed as I drove by and admired their work. What an effort.

Volunteerism and pride in your neighborhood and community make for a great place to live, work, and raise a family. We can also equate this to reduced crime. Watching these parents work side-by-side with their children was refreshing and encouraging. I was impressed by their determination and motivated by their strength. Teaching our youth the significance of community service is commendable.

Too often we think only of ourselves, I will be the first to plead guilty. We are quick at the draw to criticize, slow to provide appreciation, slower to offer assistance. If we could only make the volunteerism of the past two weeks contagious we could do so much. I would ask that those whom felt the pride of volunteerism, that sense of community service, don't let it die. Join a civic group or community organization whose existence is to help others in the community. We as citizens need to do more for our communities rather than rely on others to do it for us.

Very soon I will be launching a request for year around volunteers as well. Motivated by the strength of the county exhibited during this flooding, I will be forming the Sheriff's Posse. The Posse will be comprised of volunteers willing to donate time to the Sheriff's Department to assist in tasks that will free up the deputies for more urgent matters. Posse members will conduct traffic counts, safety belt and stop sign surveys; deploy the radar trailer, shuttle squads for service, and many other tasks. No guns, no arrest powers, simply the giving of your time to a great cause.

My hope is many become involved, not only in the Sheriff's Posse but in all areas of the community. Communities need your help, not just during disasters but every day. Thanks for listening tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us.