



Tino's Corner

You Never Know When You Will Have An Impact:

I know everyone reading this has stories about favorably impacting a life and never knowing that it was happening when it was happening. Here are two quick stories that I can share. The point of sharing the stories is not to suggest that I did anything extraordinary. There are a couple reasons I am sharing.

First, when I heard from both of the people in the stories, I was really overwhelmed with a feeling that I made a difference. Secondly, sometimes in life we move on from one thing to another and don't stop to assess the positive or harm you can be causing by any act.

David was a 14-year-old living in a home for neglected children when I met him. Like many in the "home" David's parent couldn't handle him. He got into trouble often. Not quite enough to go to juvenile incarceration but challenging enough for the judge to send him to live at the "school". I worked part-time at the home when I was in college and spent quite a bit of time with David. He was one of the toughest 14-year-olds I ever met. I was always disciplining him and talking to him about right or wrong. One of my jobs at the home was to be a judo instructor. I had a black belt and a bit of knowledge. David used to attend class. I must admit I didn't go easy on him when it came to flips and throws. I actually thought he hated me. When I graduated from Temple University I moved on from the job. Several years later I got a call from David that he wanted to come see me. We scheduled a time to get together. David was doing quite well and wanted to thank me for having so much influence on his life. I was shocked but also grateful for him taking the time to tell me I made a difference.

The second story goes back to my days as Vice President of the New Haven YMCA. Like many Y's of that vintage we had an SRO (Single Room Occupancy) for housing. We had about 300 people living in our building. Everyone had their own story. Sometimes it was their last stop and sometimes it was their start. We always tried to be helpful in a very challenging environment. Often people didn't have enough money to pay their rent and sometimes we had to evict them for that or behavioral issues. Well, about twenty years after I left that Y I got a letter in the mail. It was from someone I didn't remember. In the letter the author wanted to thank me for helping to save his life. The story goes that at the time, he didn't have a place to live and would have been out on the street. He said that I found a way to give him a room and that I (and my team) treated him with kindness. He wanted to share his post-Y life...that he had a family and a good job. He said he just wanted to thank me. This was before LinkedIn and social media. He just tracked me down and sent the letter. What a feeling that gave me!

My moral of these two stories is that sometimes you never know when you are having an impact that's positive or negative. At Turknett we speak of being mindful and aware in the moment. During this holiday season my wish for you is that you have the opportunity to display acts of kindness. There is nothing better than having a positive impact. Often, we will know right away if we are helping someone, but just as often we will never know, and don't really need to know because we are just doing our best. Then, once in a great while, you may just get the most pleasant surprise that you have made a lasting impact from a thankful fellow human.

Happy Holidays
Tino

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