

The Simple Act of Caring

The root from which ethical behavior emerges



BY BRAD YARBROUGH

Peanuts, the top-rated cartoon series of all time, was a parody of society and loved by billions. Its colorful characters gave insight into human conduct, and its readers clearly identified. In one strip, Charlie Brown asks Sally, "How was school today?" To which she replied, "Who cares?" Charlie responded by saying, "I was just asking." Then Sally announces her newly acquired perspective by stating, "It's my new philosophy...from now on, nothing bothers me. Who cares? Who cares? Who cares?" This would ultimately become one of Sally's irreverent philosophies.

In 2014, the famed cartoon's creator, Charles M. Schulz, authored *Who Cares, Charlie Brown?* A book reviewer aptly said that the story about Charlie's baseball team taught him and his teammates that winning really isn't everything, but doing the right thing is. I can hear know-it-all Lucy summarizing the gang's *aha moment* with the revelation, "It's about ethics, Charlie Brown!"

Connecting the Dots

Recently, I met with Dr. Brad Agle and Bill O'Rourke to discuss their book, *The Business Ethics Field Guide*. Brad is a Professor of Ethics and Leadership in

the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University, and Bill had most recently served as President of Alcoa-Russia before retiring. "What is the root from which the desire to be ethical emerges?" I asked Dr. Agle. His reply was simple. He said, "Ethics is rooted in one's care for others."

Ethics is about a thoughtful response to dilemmas where multiple options compete for action. Oftentimes, I've found that an ethical dilemma puts personal interests in conflict with the interests of those around me. The act of caring and ethics share common goals: making those decisions that maintain a healthy society in which the dignity of all humans is held in highest regard. A "me" attitude must often yield to a "we" mentality.

Recently, catastrophic hurricanes, mass shootings and other horrific acts have resulted in unbelievable destruction and sadly, the tragic loss of innocent lives. But these events have rallied an army of compassion. Individuals and organizations responded to the hurting with their time, talent and treasure. Their sacrificial duty to fellow human beings demonstrated one underlying motive...they CARED!

The Cajun Navy, comprised of volunteer boat owners, mobilized to rescue thousands in Irma-flooded Houston. Oklahoma Gas and Electric, a huge provider of energy to our state, sent an armada of trucks to Texas to restore power. Kevin Ryan, a friend and CEO of Covenant House, doubled efforts to provide services to homeless youth throughout the affected areas. Another longtime friend, Dr. Gary Morsch, a physician and founder of Heart to Heart International, assembled teams of doctors and other personnel to serve remote areas of Puerto Rico in Maria's aftermath. And in the midst of a senseless tragedy in Las Vegas, countless stories are told of courageous individuals acting heroically. The immediate response of law enforcement and medical professionals saved countless lives.

These recent events reminded me of another disastrous day, when on April 19, 1995, a truck-bomb killed 168 people in Oklahoma City. I was one of thousands who rushed to the site that day. The response would be termed "The Oklahoma Standard," a standard established by ordinary individuals with one common characteristic: they CARED. I again witnessed this standard of care immediately following 9/11 when the world poured out its concern and aid to the victims of terrorism. The compassion was palpable and profoundly impacted me while visiting Ground Zero and speaking at many post-tragedy events.

Ethics and care of others go hand-in-hand. They are inseparable. Now, more than ever, each of us must make a commitment to both. I hope that each IRWA member and the companies which they represent will make a conscious decision to create a culture of care, make a pledge to ethical excellence and get involved with efforts to help improve society. 🌟



Brad Yarbrough is the Owner and CEO of Pilgrim Land Services, a right of way services company in Oklahoma City. With over 35 years experience in oil and gas, he has clients nationwide and an extensive network of landmen and agents.