

Dear W.C.,

I have spent my whole life as a caregiver. When I was a child I cared for my mother when she was dying from cancer. I did not do well in school due to the amount of time I missed when caring for her. After my mother died I cared for my younger brother and sister until they graduated high school and eventually married. Then I cared for my father as he began to show signs of dementia. I spent ten years caring for my father until he passed away when I was in my thirties. I met my husband several years later at a church function and we were happy for a few years until he had an accident that left him disabled. I cared for him for over twenty years just making ends meet. I also took in my niece that is disabled after my sister died a few years ago. It was not always easy but somehow we survived until my husband died last year. I am now in my late fifties and after a lifetime of caring for others it would be nearly impossible to find a job. I can't leave my twenty year old niece alone as she is mentally handicapped. Now that I have poured out my life story I need to tell you what we are having a hard time with. I own the house my niece and I live in. Over the winter there were several repairs I had to make to the furnace and water heater. This kept me from paying my utilities. My car needs several repairs I cannot afford on our fixed income. I just feel like we are falling farther and farther behind and I don't want to lose my home. Could you please see if there is some way you could help us out of this mess?

Dear Readers,

While reading this letter I could not help but think what a self-less woman this letter writer was. Her whole life was given to the care of others. She was never able to complete school, have a career or raise children. I needed to meet this woman in person and assess her situation as it seemed it was about time someone cared for her.

I drove to the address on the letter for a spontaneous visit. I was not surprised to find a small older home. I knocked on the door and listened as I heard someone talking inside. In a moment the door was opened and a woman looking much older than the age stated in the letter stood looking at me in confusion. After a moment I saw her face register recognition and she smiled in greeting. After introductions she grasped my hand in a handshake and invited me inside.

I looked around the small foyer and into the living room where a young woman sat rocking back and forth. The older woman went to her immediately and I watched as she comforted her. After a few moments she asked the young woman, "Do you want to meet Sal? He has come here to meet you and I." The young woman looked away and shook her head no. I told the older woman to not worry about it, I could see my unplanned home check was stressful for the young woman. The older woman said, "My niece is not used to any male visitors. The only people that visit are a few women from my prayer group at church." Once the niece was calmed down and not as distressed by my presence the older woman helped her to the adjoining room so we could talk without distressing her even further.

The woman sat nervously on the corner of her chair and asked, "So how does this work?" I explained how The Time Is Now to Help provides assistance and what I needed for my

evaluation. I asked if she minded if I took a look around the small home, explaining that I would be looking for verification of their needs. I told her how I check refrigerators, cupboards and general living conditions. I explained how I checked bank statements, bills and other financial documents if necessary. The woman said, "I am a little embarrassed I haven't done the dishes yet today or made the beds." I assured her that was not what I was looking for. I told her I had made many spontaneous home checks where their living conditions were much worse than what I had glimpsed in my visit so far. I continued, "I am more concerned about food insecurity, hunger, and people sleeping on floors, unsafe situations, and evidence of drug or alcohol abuse, things like that." The older woman said, "Well we may not eat fancy and I have been to the food pantry many times but I always make sure my niece has enough to eat. And I have never touched drugs or alcohol my whole life. You are welcome to walk around and see for yourself."

After checking her refrigerator, cabinets and a quick tour of the small home I made some notes about the conditions found. I noted her refrigerator was very old and not working properly. I also noted her dryer was not working due to the clothing and towels hung everywhere to dry. I asked the woman how long it had not been working and she confessed both appliances had been bad for over six months. I also noted the sagging beds and sparse, old bedding. When I asked the woman how old her bed was I surprised when she told me the bed had originally been her parent's bed so probably over forty years old. The older woman told me how she had lived in the home since she was a child caring for her sick mother. Then she had raised her siblings there while her father worked. Once her father had developed dementia she cared for him in the home. When she met and married her husband they had moved into the home in hopes of one day moving but that day had never come when her husband had been in a devastating car accident that had left him dependant on her care for years. When her sister had died she did not hesitate to take in her niece and the added care giving she required. It was her final promise she made to her sister when she was dying that she would take care of her niece. This home had seen many years of tragedy and many years of loving care provided by this woman. I could see why she looked older than her years. It had not been an easy life for her.

The woman wiped away the tears she had shed while sharing her many painful loses and memories. She looked over at her niece as she sat watching television in the adjoining room. Then she said, "I wouldn't change my life. There were some very happy times here too. My mom and I got to spend some cherished months together before she passed. It was harder with my father as he did not always know who I was or what he was doing but there was times when he did that carried me through. My husband and I loved each other even though we never were able to have a marriage like other people. We never could have children after his accident, but I consider my niece the child I never had. Yes sometimes her mental disability is not easy but I could never consider life without her." After sharing some of the happy and tragic memories with me we moved on to talking about her financial difficulties.

I went through the documents she provided me. I saw her household repair bills and estimate for car repairs. She had not paid her utilities for three months, due to the necessary furnace and water heater repairs, but would now have to pay these to keep her utilities from being

disconnected. The car repairs were also very important to allow the two women safe transportation for food, medical care and their church activities.

While the older woman went to help her niece with a snack and a trip to the bathroom I put together a plan that would allow them to continue living in their safe and economically feasible home setting. I looked over my notes and made a list that contained new beds, new sheets, blankets and pillows, a refrigerator and dryer, food gift cards, car repairs and paying their overdue utilities and some into the future. This assistance would permit them to be self sufficient once more. When the older woman came back in the room I slid the sheet with my notes in front of her. I watched her face as she read over the list and saw the tears come to her eyes as she said, "You are going to do all this for us? I never had any idea you would help us like this. How can we ever thank you?" I told her about how all of "You" make our mission to remove the pains of poverty even possible. Then the woman said, "Then how do I thank all of those good people?" I told her, "You can thank us by praying for us and the many people we help when you have your prayer group over." Her answer was, "Like I made a promise to my sister to always care for my niece I am making a promise to you now to always pray for you and all the good people that helped us." That is truly the only thanks we need.

When I was preparing to leave I felt a light tap on my shoulder. I turned to see the niece standing before me. The older woman had told me her niece would always have the mind of a four year old child due to a birth defect. In a child like manner the young woman said, "I heard you and Auntie talking. I heard her crying but you made her smile. I like it when she smiles." I told the young woman, "I like it when your Auntie smiles too." With that she smiled and walked back to her chair. The older woman walked me to the door and said, "I have never seen her approach anyone other than me. You have definitely made both of us happy today."

After our intervention these two women are now able to live independently once more. The stress of impending disconnections and lack of transportation has been removed. The worry over appliances breaking down, the pain caused due to old sagging mattresses and the hunger due to food insecurity have all been taken away thanks to all of "You". These two women were blessed to have each other and shared a special bond that was only enhanced by our assistance. Thank "You" and God Bless You!

My dear readers and friends, we have many other fellow creations that need our help and compassion. Helping our fellow creations, our Caring and Sharing, doing our good works, is life changing for those we help. God Bless all of you for making "Our" The Time Is Now to Help a beacon of hope for those in need. Together "We" need to continue to do our good works that make our mission for God a success. Together "We" make a big difference removing the pains of poverty for our fellow creations.

Health & Happiness, Love & God Bless Everyone, W.C./Sal

Please Help: There are many coming to us in desperation. Our good fellow creations need our compassion. Together we make a big difference. Make checks payable to: The

Time Is Now to Help, P.O. Box 1, Lake Geneva, WI 53147. The Time Is Now to Help is a federally recognized 501(c)3 charitable organization licensed in the states of Wisconsin and Illinois. You will receive a tax deductible, itemized thank you receipt showing how your donation provided assistance for the poverty stricken.

A Very Special

Thank You: The Gallo Family Fund, Family Foundation, Fox Charities, Richard H. Driehaus Charitable Lead Trust, Martin Business, Mr. & Mrs. Robert Schuberth, Unilock, Rhoades Foundation, Kathleen & Brian Hurdis, Sibley-Saltinstall Charitable Foundation, Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin, Grunow Family Fund, Brian Pollard, Mark & Sandra Schmitt, Badger FFA, Church of Jesus Christ LDS, Rita's Wells Street Salon, Jeanette Logterman, Jeanne Allen, Michael & Sally Ann Chier, Shawn & Donna McLafferty, William Antti, Lisa Luedtke, John & Marian McClellan, Walter & Gloria Kosierowski, Ellen Flanagan, Patricia Jankowski, Shari & James Loback, John & Karen Burgstede, Brian & Joan Goedland, Albert & Ellen Burnell, Gregory Smith, Frank & Deborah Guido, James & Marilyn Dyer, Frances Meehan, our anonymous donors and ALL of you who support The Time Is Now to Help donation boxes, and the businesses that allow our donation boxes.

Anyone who would like a Time Is Now donation box in your business, please call (262) 249-7000.

Prayer Chain: The power of prayer and positive thoughts comes from the true healer, our Lord answering our prayers. Please pray for healing for the following people: Mike, Caroline, Susan, Jennifer, Clarence, Jayden, Santana, Alex, Lily, Kaitlyn, Kynesha, Brandi's Grandma, & Marilyn.

Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop: Please donate your gently used household items and furniture to the Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop. For local pick up of major items or collection appointments please call (262) 275-2264. Inspiration Ministries Resale Shop is located at N2270 State Rd. 67, Walworth, WI 53184. Hours: Monday – Saturday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed Sundays. Please visit often knowing your support will provide life changing assistance for the fellow creations in their care. Inspiration Ministries is home for up to 80 residents that live with multiple physical and mental challenges. I thank all of you for helping. For more information visit www.inspirationministries.org.

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