

## The pursuit of happiness

*by Mark Pavilons*

?Generosity is giving more than you can, and pride is taking less than you need.?

??halil Gibran

There's a saying that tells us to give what we are never short of.

When it comes to giving, many of us think of lavish gifts or monetary donations.

Au contraire mes amis.

If we follow the above sentiment, we give what we have in abundance. The human heart holds untold compassion and is often a motivating factor in all that we do.

The human mind never stops thinking, creating, and finding solutions.

We have so much to give, we only have to look inside.

I've been very fortunate to have met some fascinating, talented, and very giving souls in King. Several local artists have become friends and their generosity is rivalled only by their talent.

Several of them donate original works to charity or good causes, and I've witnessed this first-hand. A gift of art, while it has a monetary value, is one of the purest forms of giving.

It's a piece of work from the heart. It's an array of images that excite the human mind and spirit. It's a gift that truly keeps on giving. Money comes and goes, but a gift of art lasts forever.

What is also quite valuable ? priceless in fact ? are our personal stories.

Human beings began teaching through verbal stories, tall tales, anecdotes and personal encounters. This is how our race began, in the caves and wide open spaces of the African savanna.

We continue to tell each other stories, at public events, family gatherings, over lunch and via newspaper interviews. These stories, each and every morsel from someone's personal tale, are like gold nuggets.

I often tell people that the huge bonus of my job is meeting interesting people and learning about them ? their talent, culture, accomplishments, passion and beliefs.

It's the neatest way to learn and become an even better person!

?From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,? while originally penned for another purpose, holds true today. I wonder whether Karl Marx would applaud its use to today's world of compassionate human beings.

This is the ideal society, but of course, not so easy to put into practise. ?We have socialist and communist governments in power today, but I don't think any of them are so pure in their approach.

Most of us fully understand the concepts of giving, paying it forward and spontaneous acts of kindness.

One would think it would be the wealthy who donate the most in our society. The truth is, the dwindling middle class is the most generous group in our midst.

Perhaps it's because those of modest means hold hope, generosity and goodwill very dear to their hearts. Perhaps they've learned some hard lessons in life, or picked up some positive messages from their parents.

But you see, wealth is a relative term. In today's uncertain economic hurricanes, monetary wealth can be fleeting. Possessions are merely things ? assembled trinkets to stand as a testament to one's personal good fortune.

But seldom are vitally important things like happiness and success related to finances or career status.

Over the years, I have polled hundreds of people and asked them their definitions of happiness and success.

Not surprisingly, the answers centred around family; mental contentment; being appreciated for one's talents and putting things in perspective.

As different as the seven billion people on Earth are, we share one thing in common ??he pursuit of happiness.

I believe that giving is one of the things that separates our species from all others. Perhaps it's the only thing that differentiates humans from the rest of our yet-to-be-encountered galactic neighbours.

?Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more.?

? H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Giving to charity is another important part of our society, and local community.

Charities exist for a reason. And it's our job to not only recognize the need in among our fellow men and women, but pitch in where and when we can.

I?can never pass a homeless person or street performer in Toronto without tossing them a coin or two.

Some of us have a pet cause or charity and donate both time and money to helping others. Thank goodness for all of those dedicated service club members who form the foundation of our small towns.

There's been a downward trend in the proportion of Canadians donating to registered charities and the share of income they donate. I've been steadfast, almost to an annoying degree, in helping raise funds for my daughter Lexie. She goes on one or two volunteer humanitarian trips each year, helping those in developing countries. It's part of who she is.

She says it's a passion, an urge deep down, that has to be met. She not only gives, she receives the richness of humanity in the people she meets. She learns about cultures, attitudes, strength of faith, hope, family and love.

These are all intangible, but oh, so valuable.