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## Look for the Helpers

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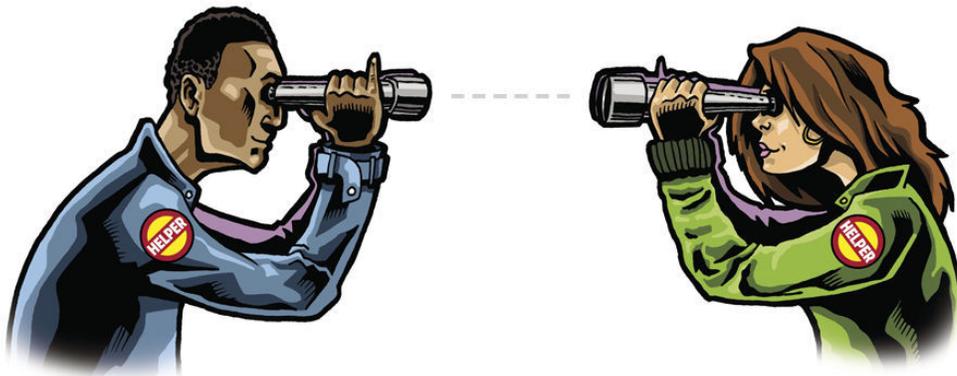
ASTOUND OURSELVES

## Look for the helpers

Tara Louise Casey Jul 23, 2016

Tara Louise Casey writer's photo  
for HELP

Tara Louise Casey



As I sit down to write this column, I must admit my brain is distracted. It is distracted by the calendar on the wall that is telling me that students are returning in little over a month (didn't they just leave?). It is distracted by the warmer weather, which, in the South, means higher than usual consumption of sweet tea. It is distracted by the piles of files on my floor that resulted from the great cabinet purge of 2016.

But mostly it is distracted by the news that tells me what is wrong in our society, especially when I know that so many people are doing right by our society, unreported. It is distracted as I try to reconcile perceived widespread systemic failures with the commitment to service I know has been made by individuals and institutions.

It may seem simplistic, or at worse sophomoric, but Mr. Rogers has helped me bring my mind into focus. Mr. Rogers once said, "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' "

So, as I sit and wrestle with the news stream that surrounds me, I look for the helpers. And I find ... you.

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**Inside of each** of us is the capacity to be the helper that provides a salve to our world's wounds. We all can be the helpers when we create, cultivate, and operate pro bono service and community engagement programs that focus on increased access to justice in our society.

We can be the helpers as we educate, mentor, and counsel our students on these complex societal issues, and emphasize their role in either perpetuating problems or finding solutions. We can be the helpers as we forge community partnerships that link groups together that would otherwise not have found common ground.

Our task is not an easy one to undertake or accomplish, as we ourselves encounter challenges to our efforts. Those challenges may be external as we attempt to disrupt and dismantle systems that have perpetuated inequity in our society. Those challenges may also be internal as we question our own efforts and abilities to effectuate such desired change.

But we cannot forget that another definition for the word “challenge” is “a call to take part in a contest.” Therefore, the initial challenge we must all overcome is whether to accept the challenge at all.

There is no definitive map to navigate obstacles. There is no clear idea really of what meaningful success will look like. But that does not mean that there is no help for the helpers.

We have each other to brainstorm ideas, address concerns, and share stories. We can come to each other, grant each one the benefit of the doubt, and know that our intent is just, even when our words are unartful. The onus is upon us to connect over desks, dining tables, coffee, or cell phones — and seek out the help needed to become a helper.

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**Thomas Edison once** said, “If we did all the things we are capable of, we would literally astound ourselves.”

Although my 7th grade English teacher may take issue with his use of the word “literally,” no one should doubt the meaning of Edison’s challenge. If, every day, every one of us committed our fullest to be helpers in our society, the impact upon us personally and societally would be profound.

When we see fear, sorrow, and abjection, we need to look for those who will heal our community, guide our children, steward our institutions.

We need to look for the helpers.

We need to look for each other.

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