

During this time of year everyone seems to be in a better mood. It may be that we are looking forward to spending quality time with our families and friends. We often feel more generous this time of year and give to help those less fortunate, through the Salvation Army bell ringers, our church or other preferred charity. However, once the holidays pass, we forget about the growing needs of those less fortunate in our community. It may be time to consider how we can become a more compassionate and giving community year round; a community that is known for its positive vibe, in contrast to the overwhelming negative wave that seems to have swept over our country in the past few years. Here are a few things to consider adding to your New Year's Resolutions list in 2018.

Assume the best: Assume the best in people. I am often surprised by people that assume something that is said or an initiative that is launched, is intended to deliberately attack them or their organization. Their response is often defensive and harsh when the original intent was to just help someone or to make the community better. This attack, counter-attack mentality can be quickly defused by an assumption that the other person intends to make things better. In most cases that is genuinely what the intent is, and we are much happier when we are working together.

Help the less fortunate year-round: Many people complain about the homeless in our community and impulsively murmur to "just get a job." What we fail to acknowledge is that many of them are not able to get a job because "an estimated 46% of homeless adults have severe mental illness and/or substance use disorders." If that same "beggar" had just one leg in a wheel chair trying to roll up a curb, most of us would stop and help them up. Yet, because we can't see their disability or know their personal situation, the Scrooge in us comes out, and we assume the worst. These people need our help, not with a dollar or two thrown at them or stuffed in a red kettle during the holidays, but with homes and services that will help them overcome their disabilities. These services cost money, and if we are going to be a compassionate community, we will need to step up and provide them.

Tolerate change and each other: A compassionate community understands that affordable and workforce housing is needed, but if we are dominated by a "not in my back yard" (NIMBY) attitude we will only exacerbate the homeless problem. Encouraging more infill, apartments and lower cost housing is a challenge nationally, but if we are going to become a great city, and resist urban sprawl, we must be tolerant of others and support the changes needed to increase density and keep housing affordable. Yes that may be in our back yards.

Positive and Upbeat: In short, it is easy to be cheerful during the holiday season, but we should strive to be positive and compassionate year round. We can assume the best in others, help each other out in times of need, and tolerate and even welcome, not resist the change that comes with the transition our community is going through. Working together is so much better than the caustic and acrimonious interactions you see on TV and in other areas. Let's make this community one we can all enjoy and be proud of, year-round – Happy Holidays.