

COMMUNITY OUTREACH—WHO CARES?

Janice P. Maitland, Principal 9-12, Crawford Adventist Academy, Willowdale, ON

The reference to Dorcas, “this woman was full of good works and alms deeds which she did” (Acts 9:36), speaks to the importance of reaching out to help in our communities. The record continues by stating that Dorcas was sick and subsequently died. When she died, the mourners testified of her kindness and sympathy to them while she was alive. They showed garments that she had made and assured those who were present that she would be sorely missed.



The Seventh-day Adventist Church prides itself on being a caring church that not only takes care of its own constituents, but also reaches out into the community in which it is located and beyond its boundaries. This is demonstrated through the food banks operated by some churches, and through the many soup kitchens and by participation in the “Touch of Love” program in which food is prepared and given to the homeless along with blankets, socks etc.

Campolo, 1983, (well known Evangelical preacher and author) states that Jesus came to transform society. He also believes that the church should transform society through social interaction. The school is an extension of the church and its beliefs; therefore, the school needs to transform society by its social interaction—community service activities. In 1999, the Ontario Ministry of Education revised the secondary school program to include a mandatory 40 hours of community service activities. Every student, from that time, who intends to complete the high school diploma, must provide evidence to the school in which they are enrolled of the completion of that requirement. Prior to the Ministry of Education’s mandating the 40 hours, Crawford Adventist Academy was requiring of its high school students, completion of a minimum of 10 community service hours per year. We believe that it is part of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19, 20) to engage in activities that help spread the gospel by being social to save.

This year, one of our parents took the initiative to inform us of a tree-planting project in which we were more than happy to participate. The activity took place on Sunday, October 15, and although it was not a school day, several students from the Elementary as well as the High School Division participated, on a day when the temperature was less than inviting. The tree planting was a Downsview Park project to create a beautiful, forested area. Some students reported that the experience was rewarding because they could immediately see the results of their labour. Others stated that they felt it was their way of “saving the environment.” Instead of cutting down trees to make paper, they were planting them as part of the beautification project.

The greatest and best example we have of one who helped improve the life of every community that He visited was Jesus. He left every community better than He met it because He demonstrated caring and compassion.

Hats off to you, Crawford! Continue to share your time, talents and abilities to enrich and enhance the lives of those in your communities. Jesus said that we are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). In reaching out in the community, we are letting our light shine. Jesus also said that we are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13). By engaging in community service activities such as tree planting, we are definitely playing a part in preserving the earth as salt does to preserve food. Jesus has commanded all those who claim to follow Him, to go out there and change the world.

Resources:

- Campolo, T. (1983). *Ideas for Social Action*. Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.
- The Bible. King James Version. Toronto, ON: Collins' Clear-Type Press.

