

MORE FROM HOMEPAGE

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July 17

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OPINION

Keep the tools of hope like a fire extinguisher - always within reach

Put out the fires of despair.



By Leeanne R. Hay

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*This column is part of an end-of-year faith commentary series called **Risk Hope**. Get weekly roundups of the project in your email inbox by signing up for the **Living Our Faith newsletter**.*

If I could give everyone a gift this holiday season, it would be a beautiful box filled with hope. Although hope costs nothing, it can mean everything in the quality of our lives.

Every day for the last nine months, headlines and breaking news alerts have alternated from terrifying to dispiriting. Buried deep in the background and often unaddressed are the stories of hopes fulfilled. Couples have married, babies were born, and medical tests came back negative. Institutions awarded high school diplomas and college degrees. Neighbors went outside and waved to one another on evening walks while shouting greetings across the street.

ADVERTISING

North Texas Giving Day 2020 broke all records for financial gifts to more than 3,200 nonprofits helping those of us in need. More than 106,000 people made monetary donations and nearly 23,000 pledged over 600,000 volunteer hours. Hope in action looks like this.



COMMENTARY

How are you creating hope in 2020?

BY ELIZABETH SOUDER OPINION



Ordinary personal realizations and successes that make life extraordinary are still with us. These pure and straightforward moments are the threads woven into healthy children, families and communities. Remind yourself and others of this often to let hope thrive.



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One of my heroes of hope is the late Oseola McCarty, a Black woman who led a hope-filled life with her work and faith. Although she had only a sixth-grade education, her mother taught her a trade and the importance of saving money. For over 70 years, McCarty took in laundry to earn a living. She lived to age 91. By living a frugal life, she was able to save a small fortune, and in 1995, she donated \$150,000 to the University of Southern Mississippi. The endowment she founded gave hope to Black students from southern Mississippi who could not otherwise afford to attend college. Her gift inspired contributions from others, some celebrities, some not. Today, her legacy of hope continues to ripple outward with each student, and into their communities.

Hope transcends social status.

A friend of mine, Phoebe Bata, is an accomplished professional who is also a kind and moral young woman, and she is an atheist. When asked what gives her hope, she said, “Weirdly, I’ve found hope in social media. Family and friends have continued to post about the actions they take to make the world better. Not all of them and not all the

time, but some people I did not expect ... have been surprisingly vocal about their desire for justice. That gives me hope. Maybe we can still fix things if we all do something every day to try.”

Hope is not limited to faith in God. Hope is more than a state of mind. Hope is also a state of being that is nurtured with kindness for oneself and others. A thoughtful action, an unexpected affirmation to someone, or simple politeness to another person heartens both the receiver and giver. The kid on a bike who steers more than 6 feet away from me when I’m walking our dog, so I don’t have to cross the street, gives me hope.

The package delivery person who saw the shoebox I put out for nesting mourning doves and said, “You’re doing God’s work,” gives me hope.

The nurse who continued to care for my father as he took his last breaths of life on earth gives me hope.

Certainly, there are dire situations that seem hopeless. A loop of thoughts can be relentless in repeating sorrowful memories and negative emotions. There can be times when finding hope for yourself feels unachievable. Keep the tools to help you find hope like a fire extinguisher — always within reach.

A photograph of a loved one in your wallet. An inspirational book or sentiment on your bedside table. An app on your phone. Love, thoughtfulness and playfulness foster hope. A family member, a friend, a clergyperson can help you uncover hope.

Some resources: Call 1-800-662-HELP to reach the national Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for free, confidential support and referrals that will guide you to hope. Alcoholics Anonymous has online meetings now that express the power of hope one day at a time. 1-800-273-TALK, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, at all times, has someone waiting for you to talk with them about finding hope.

Reach out to find hope. Or save this column.

Place it in a box or on a computer file, and open it when needed. Hope will be there for you.

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