

Living Our Values: *Compassion*

We demonstrate through our words and actions a deep empathy for those in need and a strong desire to help alleviate their suffering.



Leola draws inspiration from books such as "I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America" by Brian Lanker

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In the Bible there is a story of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Two people happened by, saw the man and passed him by. But a Samaritan came upon the distressed man, and he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set the injured man on his own animal and took him to an inn to take care of him.

In my young life, I also came into contact with a Good Samaritan. I was newly separated from my husband with children to feed and care for, and I did not know how I was going to manage that without some help. When I was at my lowest point, there came a knock at the door. It was my next door neighbor bearing several bags of groceries and an envelope filled with cash. She gave these to me with words of encouragement. I was overwhelmed with relief and gratitude for her generosity and compassion for my dire situation. In the years that followed, I endeavored to emulate my former neighbor and become a conduit to aid for people in need. In my 37 years working with various agencies assisting clients, I have personally provided food, clothing, money, shelter, or simply an ear to listen to their problems or a shoulder to cry on. My reward? A radiant smile on the face of the recipient, sometimes tears of gratitude and a heartfelt thank you. That response warms my heart and gives me a euphoric feeling of accomplishment that no man-made drug could ever reproduce.

Compassion drives us at HopeHealth, and we answer the call for help when we see a client suffering a hardship. This year, some HopeHealth staff are adopting a client's newborn infant in order to provide the items she needs for him. Others are adopting entire families to make sure they know on Christmas morning that someone cares for them.

At HopeHealth, I have seen staff take up a collection to buy a client new boots so he could do his job and put another client up in a Florence hotel overnight so he could be on time for his 8 a.m. dental appointment. I have seen staff buy clients' children some toys so they wouldn't be disappointed on Christmas morning. The compassion shown at HopeHealth goes on and on. We do this so often, it has become natural for staff to see a need and provide for their client. If we all practiced compassion on a daily basis, the world would be a much better place in which to live.

Compassion is a wonderful characteristic to possess. Ideally, one must be kind, selfless, caring and have empathy for others. One must also understand or at least imagine what it is like to be in need of help. To me, compassion is identifying that need, being conscious of how the person feels and then doing everything I can to assist and relieve their predicament.

I hope in my lifetime I have done that and will continue to do so every chance I get.