

I guess I am doing this for several reasons. I like running, I enjoy helping other people, it's a good way to put my miles to good use, it gets me out of the house for 8 hours, etc. But one big reason is that I am frustrated, I suppose you could say that I have "bailout burnout." I don't mind helping people that need help. In fact, I've learned that I am happiest when I am serving others. But it seems to me that our nation is "bailing out" the wrong things and thereby neglecting those that could really benefit. I realize that it's tough when someone loses a job... I've been there. But if that someone is a middle-manager for a large corporation, has an MBA and a plethora of professional skills and experience, they'll find another job relatively easily. It's relative because for someone else who never made it to college, has a young child to take care of, can't afford child care and needs a flexible work schedule, finding another job could be downright impossible.

As a nation, we've recently bailed out corporations to avoid a crisis in the financial market, stave off job losses and to lessen the downturn in the economy, among many other things. But we've dumped billions of dollars into these enterprises out of fear, not a desire to help. And, sadly, whether or not the government's intervention provided any long-term benefits will be debated for a long time to come.

The first five years of my life I lived in a trailer. (I obviously didn't come from a wealthy family.) I graduated high school in northern Indiana and my parents saw to it that I was the first of the family to go to college. After coming close to squandering my God-given ability to learn, I eventually graduated from college and graduate school. My high school was in Elkhart County where unemployment recently topped 18% and although I was fortunate to take a different path, I've got a few buddies in the area who have been out of work for a while. They've had some "help." Their unemployment benefits have been extended and there has been some limited education opportunities. But I'm pretty sure that the help they received was miniscule compared to the amount of the salaries, benefits and bonus payments that some of the bailout dollars funded at these companies that were "too big to fail."

In a recent story on Good Morning America, Bill Weir was in Elkhart County interviewing some of these guys that were laid off due to a drastic downturn in the local economy. There were few if any jobs available and these men had already been out of work for several months. Part of the interview was being conducted at a shelter, but the men weren't residents there. They were donating their time and trade skills to renovate the shelter and make it better for someone who may really need it. In my opinion, that's the right attitude.

Near where I live now here in Texas, there's a local ministry called GRACE, Grapevine Relief and Community Exchange, whose motto is "Giving as we have received, to help those in need." GRACE is a wonderful organization that has many different ministries. Here's a snippet from their website regarding the transitional housing program...

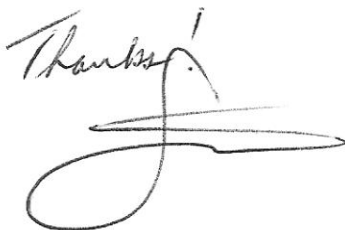
*The transitional housing program allows homeless families to enjoy clean, stable housing for up to two years while they work toward independence. Housing clients participate in intensive case management, pursuing educational, career, and financial goals during their stay. All activities are aimed at self-determination and eventual self-sufficiency.*

...So, I guess I am doing this in the hopes that we can help people that are "too important to fail."

This is a true "bailout" for someone that could truly benefit from it. Who knows, maybe in one of these families there's a kid with great potential that will be set on a different life path due to a positive change in his or her circumstances, a change that we helped bring about. Regardless, what we're doing with this will make a few people happy and hopefully help make their lives a little easier.

That's a great birthday present, isn't it?

Thanks!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Thanks!" with a large, stylized flourish at the end.