

2017 Nashvillian of the Year

Easter Seals Dinner

I want to thank the Nashville Chamber of Commerce and Easter Seals Tennessee for this recognition. This dinner and honor give me an opportunity to express my great appreciation for the tremendous heart and spirit of this great community and my thoughts on its under used community capacity and how we could and should commit ourselves, as community in the larger sense, to a higher quality of life standard for many of our citizens who lack the ability to fully deal with the challenges caused by physical and mental disabilities on their own.

When I think about the people that the Easter Seals programs serve, I know but for the grace of god it would be me. They did not choose their condition. Further, they are our children, our parents, our brothers and sisters, our friends, and our neighbors, all vital members of our vibrant growing community. Those of us who do not live with the constraints of limited resources, inaccessibility, unemployability, and freedoms that we may take for granted have, at the very least, the responsibility to help alleviate their challenges to merely cope with everyday life while living on the sidelines in a society brimming with freedoms you enjoy every day. I know that you understand this responsibility or you would not be here tonight in support of Easter Seals.

The problem is that there is still a large gap between the resources provided by those of us with the responsibility to care for people who need it most, and the unmet needs of those who are challenged to handle basic daily living activities and complicated health issues. Federal, state and local governments provide much needed support, but we all know that there is still a tremendous gap in unmet needs that is left to non-profit organizations which are funded mostly by foundations and individuals; you, me and others. Easter Seals is one of these organizations.

If we expect to succeed in helping to provide a base line life quality to those among us who need and deserve our support, we have got to do something different, something more, because we are not yet getting it done. Using our time, talent and treasure we are going to have to produce an advocacy that is much deeper and wider than that exists today.

Our enhanced advocacy must include a sustained effort to develop a community conscious of basic human needs, and dignity and respect for all people, especially people with disabilities. It must include stepping up to our individual and collective responsibility that goes with our more fortunate quality of life and ability to enjoy health, abundance and prosperity. I know that some of you have heard me speak of a community conscious before. I believe that the power of a heightened positive community conscious, that includes the understanding of our responsibility for one another in this regard, can produce unparalleled uplifting of the entire community.

Ben Rechter 7/20/17

We are going to have to fight harder against the nature that causes us to be sometimes reluctant advocates. We are going to have to raise our voices to help others to understand the responsibility put on us by a light life burden. If you and I are strong enough in our desire to have a community conscious that causes us to live up to our responsibility, great progress can be made toward easing the heavier life burden of others. If each of us were to increase our advocacy it would make a huge change in all of our lives, and we do, by the grace of God, have that responsibility to take care of one another.

I am asking each of you to ramp up your stake in, and your advocacy for this responsibility and the commitment that goes with it. I can assure you that doing so is rewarding as I have observed that there is joy in being this type of advocate. When advocacy is about the community use of available the time, talent, and treasure to help others it's easy to determine the outcome. The more you sow the more you reap.

I thank you for the privilege to speak tonight.