

I'm here as a volunteer because I think this is an opportunity to make a difference.

There are **many things you can't change**.

In fact, things can get completely out of your control in seconds.

I learned this one Saturday night when I was 18 years old. I was driving home on a motorscooter when I saw two sets of headlights approaching in the distance. How many times have you seen this? It appeared as if one car was passing the other and was over on my side of the road. **This** time, it was different. As we got closer, I realized the car on my side of the road was well ahead of the other, and it wasn't going back. **There was nothing I could do**. Although it seemed to take a long time, like a slow motion sequence in a movie, I calculated later, that, at a **combined speed of over 100 miles an hour**, it took **less than 4 seconds** to close the last few hundred yards between that big Ford and my motorscooter.

I recall that collision vividly--if you can picture being slammed against the front of a car at a hundred miles an hour...

I don't know how my parents felt. Thank God I've not had this situation with my own children. They told my parents not to hurry to the hospital--there was nothing they could do.

But, I am here today. The reason I lived is that there was a safety net in that community: a volunteer emergency rescue unit, a Red Cross blood supply, and there were volunteers. In that second car, there was a registered nurse. She and her husband were returning from a

Saturday dinner out. This couldn't have been easy for them to deal with. Seeing this hopeless situation, **It would have been easier to drive on by and assume that they could never do enough to make a difference--but they didn't--** They didn't hesitate to stop, to volunteer to help me. **They did what they could, and it made a lifetime of difference to me.**

The next few years were difficult. There were times I felt like just giving up. and letting it go.





One friend was an especial help to me during this time. His name was Greg Murphy. Greg was in his mid teens, but he couldn't read, and he couldn't do basic arithmetic. Greg **couldn't do** many of the basic things in life that I took for granted. We worked on it together for a few days a week. It was work. There were times we felt like giving up, but we continued. We went through the McGuffey Readers and math books from first to seventh grade. Greg learned to read, and to do math through 7th

grade level. When we got to geometry, we reached the limits, and we couldn't do anymore, but we **did what we could**, and, as a result, Greg was able to get a job. Together, we did something that we couldn't have done alone. Greg got a job. And I got to feel useful at a time when I desperately needed it. I think this is what led me to where I am today, and why I feel the way I do about teaching. I understood then, how important it is, **for everyone**, to be, and to be treated as, a useful and productive human being. ****

We **all** have things we can't do. Even people we wouldn't think of as being "disabled" in any way. Think about things you wish you could do, but you can't. Things you wish you could control, but you don't. Things you wish you could change....

Life is filled with change. Change can be thrust on you suddenly and disastrously. Then what will you do? You can be a passive victim of change. You can give up. Or you can work with change to make change work for you. Mourn and grieve for a while, accept the things you can't do and get on with life--and never let the things you **can't** do interfere with the things you **can** do. ****

What really strikes me is that this story really isn't very unusual. I'm sure, as I was relating all this, many of you were thinking about something similar that you've been through, or something that happened to someone close to you. We are all, as we hurtle down this highway of life, only seconds away from disastrous change that would rob us of our independence-- so we need that safety net to survive. We can all be victims of change, struggling to survive, but then we can grow beyond survival to build a better world for



ourselves and for others we share it with. And now we are all only minutes or hours away from an opportunity to do something that makes that kind of a difference. Through the United Way, we can do something together that we couldn't do any other way. There is no way that you or I, by ourselves, could investigate all the good causes in the depth that they are reviewed by volunteer committees--citizens like you and me. There is no way that we, by ourselves, could be there to help and individually interact with the over 800,000 St. Louis citizens who are touched by United Way each year.

Sometimes, especially as a volunteer, it's easy to get discouraged over the things you can't change, to make excuses over the things you don't control--to almost feel guilty because you wish you could do more...but you can't.

Sometimes, **It might seem easier** to make excuses. To complain about "having our arms twisted at work", that "the whole thing is run by hypocrites", that "We could never do enough to make a difference anyway." It might seem easier to just make excuses, to **drive on by** and let it go--It might seem easier to just give up.

But, this is what it all comes down to: Because there are **so many things we can't change**, so many things we **don't control**, so many things we **can't do**, don't miss this opportunity to do something **that is so easy to do** and that can make a lifetime of difference to so many people.

Do what you can.

Don't let it go.

