

Not a Compassionate Nation . . . Yet

One might conclude from America's quick and generous response to help the loved ones of those killed on 9/11 that we are a nation of modern day Good Samaritans. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The sad fact is that only the survivors of **major** high profile tragedies are likely to receive the immediate care they need. When a major tragedy strikes — the public responds, professional helpers magically appear, politicians speak, and money flows. But the survivors of the "daily disasters" that occur in our communities are not so fortunate. I'm referring to the 80-year-old man who awakens at 6:00 a.m. to find his wife of 60 years dead; or the 6-year-old child whose brother is found drowned in the pool. Although these victims suffer just as much as victims of major events, our efforts to help them can only be described as **pitiful**. The emergency response systems (Police, Fire, Hospital ER) rush to the scene to do what we pay them to do — CPR, fight the fire, investigate, extricate, and secure the scene. But then they leave, and often they leave emotionally devastated survivors behind to fend for themselves. Ironically, when the incident is especially tragic (death of a baby, for example) emergency responders return to the station where they receive a "critical incident debriefing" to help them deal with **their** pain. Back at the home, the parents of the baby suffer alone. What's wrong with that picture!??

Public safety officials (Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs, EMS Chiefs) must take the lead in helping survivors of tragic events. These chiefs act very quickly to support family members when one of their own has fallen. They need to provide the same support to the rest of us when tragedy strikes..

There are programs in the country called TIP Programs (www.tipnational.org) which train citizen volunteers to assist survivors of the quiet daily tragedies. Communities across the country can use these programs as models to start their own programs.

Surely a nation, which had the heart and resources to help the thousands of survivors of 9/11, can find a way to help the elderly man whose wife has died at home after 60 years of marriage.

Wayne Fortin
Vista, CA
tipinccceo@aol.com
(714) 314-0744