





'Humbled by humankind' while helping flood victims

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DEAR EDITOR:

I spent Saturday morning helping a friend and co-worker recover her home and her life from the floods in Austell. As I did, I was able to marvel at the wonder of humanity. I am not sure how large a tragedy needs to be in order to allow one to make sweeping observations about people. Perhaps tragedy simply causes you to notice things that otherwise happen every day because these things become focused in one location. I hope this is the case.

On Saturday I discovered something important: Most people are good people who are trying to do good things for themselves, for their families and for others. You see, as we moved around in the debris, I saw countless citizens pass by carrying water, food and other supplies. Ingenious folks had rigged grills in the beds of trucks to create a mobile hot dog service. Government and charitable agencies came and went, methodically and efficiently loading and delivering dumpsters, meals and supplies.

Most remarkable, however, were the people. On that day, there were no Democrats or Republicans. On that day, no one was shouting about health care. I started to think that on that day, everyone was just a "Cobb Countian," but that was not true. People had come from all over Atlanta. In fact, it is inaccurate to say that everyone was just a "Georgian" on that day. No doubt that the contributions to the Red Cross, Salvation Army and the taxes supporting the federal aid were made from all across the nation. I thought perhaps that we were all just "Americans" coming together to help each other.

This is also untrue. I do not know for sure, but I think some of those who were toting ruined dry wall and soggy insulation might have come to this country illegally. For some reason, on this day, I do not think anyone cared. I know I did not. The same can be said about religion, sexual preference, race, gender and ethnicity.

In the end, the day was a testament to humanity. As tragedies unfold, it is human nature that always triumphs. I know that humankind has its wars, crime, selfishness and greed. I know that these evils persist in society. I think on most days we are trapped by the news about these evils. I know that time will pass and we will return to our debates and disagreements. For that moment, as we all stood in our metaphorical "cleft in the rock," the glory, goodness and compassion that exist in this world passed over us. I left inspired and I will be forever grateful and humbled by the wonder of humankind.

Justin O'Dell