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Monday, August 17, 2009

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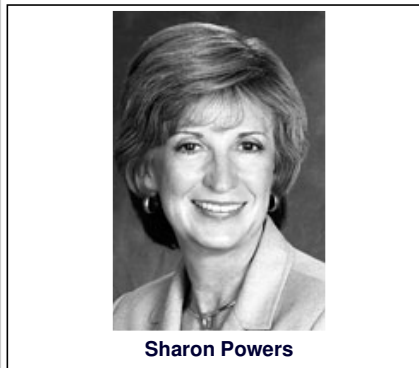
With economy struggling, now's a good time to help community

It's been a long couple of years. For the majority of us, this recession has been unlike anything we have ever experienced before. We've seen revenues decrease, solid long-time companies fold, and good employees let go as cost-saving measures. Private-sector employees have seen their wages frozen or cut, have had their hours or benefits slashed. Those with jobs are grateful for the continued paycheck.

Although it's been tough out there for all of us, it has been even harder for those dependent on others' goodwill. Families that struggled in a good economy are desperately hanging on now. Social agencies have had their budgets cut as their loads have significantly increased.

The school year will begin in a couple of weeks. Struggling families will find it hard to buy needed school supplies. Teachers who typically have purchased classroom supplies from their own pockets will find it even harder to do so given salary cuts. Several retailers and office-supply stores now have school supplies on sale. Next time you're shopping in one of these shops, pick up a couple of packages of paper, a few notebooks, or a few packages of pencils to donate. The chamber continually collects school supplies and nonperishable food items for its at-risk school partners. Your donations can be dropped off at the chamber or at any chamber event. With 146 schools in which the majority of students are living at or below poverty level, the need is great throughout Southern Nevada. If you haven't signed on to support a local school, consider doing so; many need your help. You don't need to provide financial support; providing the gift of time can be just as valuable. Consider reading and spending time with students.

Understand that many of your employees may be worried about their financial futures, worried about losing their homes to foreclosure, or worried about their job security. Employees who were once productive may become listless and appear uninterested in their work. Although you should expect employees to do the jobs that they are being paid to do,



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understand that
these are
extenuating
circumstances.

The economy has
affected more than
people. Pets are
being abandoned,
either on the streets
or at shelters.
Rescue groups are
being overwhelmed
by the numbers of
pets being
surrendered to them.
Lied Animal Shelter
receives

approximately 1,900
animals each month
with 50 percent of those having to be euthanized largely because of space
limitations. Although spaying and neutering are paramount to solving pet
overpopulation, thousands of animals are being forced from their homes
because of the economic downturn. Consider donating to one of the
valley's many shelters and rescue groups; many are run by volunteers
and grass-roots effort. In addition to money, they need pet food and
supplies. If you've been contemplating adding a dog or cat to your family,
wait no longer; there are hundreds waiting for you to rescue them. Even
if you already have a pet or two, I strongly urge you to open your homes
and hearts to one more homeless waif. The appreciation and adoration
that will come with that decision will be well worth it.

Whether your volunteer or charitable interests lean toward education,
social service networks, or helping our four-legged companions, now is
the time to put your own self-interests and problems aside and help those
in greater need. The world will look a little brighter if you do.

Sharon Powers is president and chief executive officer of the North Las
Vegas Chamber of Commerce.

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