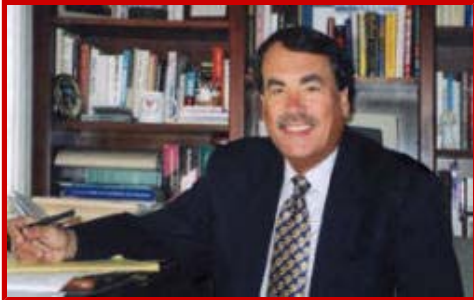




From the Founder: My Views



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CAST OF CHARACTERS

by: Wayne Fortin

One of the unique characteristics of the TIP Program is our "broad brush approach." By broad brush, I mean that we respond to assist the young, the old, the rich, the poor and citizens of all races and ethnic backgrounds. And we respond to all kinds of crises. Finally, we provide our services in a variety of locations, from upscale homes to small one bedroom apartments. Our motto could be, "Bring it on!"

In the TIP Volunteer Training Academy, we refer to the many different people we serve affectionately as "the cast of characters." Serving the "cast of characters" is a real strength of our organization and it certainly adds challenge to the job of our TIP volunteers.

While there are no clients more important than others, I can tell you that when we are serving those who Mother Teresa referred to as "the poorest of the poor" and grant makers refer to as "the most vulnerable." We are, I believe, at our best. As you read this, somewhere in the country, there is a TIP volunteer helping a fragile young child, or an elderly person with Alzheimer, or a person who can't speak English, or a person with a history of alcohol or drug abuse, or someone with a mental illness, or a family so poor they can't afford to bury a loved one.

It's one thing to respond to calls to assist the cast of characters, but it's quite another to respond with compassion and respect. There is a danger when regularly serving those who are struggling and may be "living on the edge" to become calloused and judgmental. Fortunately, our volunteers don't fall into that trap. As one volunteer said to me after returning from a call with a "rough" client — "after spending time with him, I saw below the roughness to just a grief stricken human being."

Just as many people (including myself) believe that the basic test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable, I believe you can test the character of an organization by how it treats its most vulnerable and "least attractive" clients.

Using this test, we are an organization with a strong character indeed!

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