

AWARD FOR DUMPSTER DIVING

It's always been a highlight of our recent annual management meetings: An associate's name is called as the winner of his or her division's *Whatever It Takes And Then Some* customer service award. The associate – amid applause and a standing ovation, at that – comes up on the stage.

And each time, there is a look of disbelief – or, in most cases – tears on the cheeks. These winners are overwhelmed at what is just happening to them.

The exceptional acts of service that brought them here were not done for personal gain or even recognition. They were performed because their work is all about those they serve, and not about them.

And yet, these awards – nominated and approved by their peers and hailed by corporate leadership – matter. Deep down inside, they matter.

Last Tuesday, an email from my office went out to executive directors, regional and division vice presidents reminding our leadership that the time has come to select the 2016 divisional winners. Facilities should have their nominations forwarded to the division office no later than Monday, Dec. 19, and Kelly Wilcoxon in the president's office must have the divisions' selections by Monday, Jan. 9, 2017.

Worthy recipients are all around us. Here is one recent example:

Ronald Gibbens is the chef at Life Care Center of Hendersonville, North Carolina. When the hearing aids of resident Margaret Fox went missing, an exhaustive search was made, but to no avail. Perhaps, it was concluded, they might have wound up in the dumpster.



So Gibbens went dumpster diving about 8 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 28. Dark skies were overhead, punctuated with lightning as a thunderstorm approached. Gibbens wasn't deterred.

He used a ladder to crawl down in the dumpster, but he found no hearing aids in the first two bags of trash. With a flashlight, he went back to the dumpster and searched through a third bag of trash, finally spotting the hearing aids.

Gibbens was nominated for the award by Ms. Fox, the resident, and by Qua Hill, receptionist.

"Thank you so much for 'dumpster diving' for my missing hearing aids," Ms. Fox said. "I don't know many people who would go the extra mile like you did for me!"

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The family was so impressed by what Gibbens did that he was offered \$50 for his good deed. He declined their offer, turning the money into his supervisor the same day. Thomas Hager, executive director, called the family to inform them that associates could not accept money because of federal guidelines and company policy. So the family requested that the money be donated in some manner.

When Hager advised Gibbens the family wanted the money to go to some worthy cause, he suggested – since he likes to buy gifts at Christmastime for residents who do not have family – that the money go to the Activity Department for that purpose.

Department heads were so blown away by Gibbens' selfless acts – finding the hearing aids and then designating the reward money for needy residents – that he was unanimously voted the WITATS award for the month.



Gibbens' honesty in turning in the money was multiplied from the \$50 to the \$100 award. "I believe God's Word calls it 'a double portion,'" Hager said.

"Some people would say that I was just lucky finding the hearing aids, but I know it was God's blessing," Gibbens said.

Hager describes Gibbens as "an exceptional co-worker with a big heart. The Lord works through our acts of kindness. My Mom used to say, 'Kindness is love in its work clothes.'"

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter