

Only Connect

By Ellen Clark Anderson '64

Ellen Anderson, CRMS Class Rep for 1964, is co-founder of a non-profit corporation called Caring For One Another, which is a Christian Science outreach program whose purpose is to help individuals stay connected.

In theory, our organization deals with anyone, of any age, who is seeking resources that can be of help, such as information about religion-based or social services. In actuality, we deal mostly with elderly people who live alone. There are likely more single elders now than at any point in human history. Aloneness in itself does not translate into loneliness, but it can if no one is paying attention. In many situations we learn of some kind of estrangement between the elder and a family member, which is problematic for elders who need a relative to care for them in their later years. We regularly see the problems caused when individuals find themselves disconnected from their families, friends, and organizations that would or could help them.

This “disconnect” can be caused by many things--fear of not being at their best, fear of what others will think, fear of not being good enough or of having failed, fear of having their independence taken away, or fear of being vulnerable or impoverished.

Our goal is to encourage those who contact us to “re-connect” and to stay connected to those who can help. Our volunteers, via phone calls or home visits, offer possible solutions in a sincere and confidential manner. They become a trusted and regular contact, a connection.

How does our organization’s experience translate to other arenas? Why should one stay connected with others, like classmates? Why bother to reach out, or to invest energy in maintaining connections with friends from years ago?

I believe that the answer is that the power that is evident when sincere individuals communicate is the closest thing to truth that is possible on Earth. Some would call this synergy. Whatever it is called, it is invisible but so palpable it is inspiring and is one of life’s richest rewards--a communication that transcends mere interdependent mortal relationships. This is the arena where great possibilities reveal themselves, where good ideas prevail, take shape, grow, and produce positive results.

When I speak of Truth, I am inferring a spiritual element. When I arrived in Carbondale to attend Colorado Rocky Mountain School in 1962, I immediately responded to the emphasis on the search for Truth. I recall late-night conversations in the dorms and discussions in the classrooms and elsewhere about reality--what is real, what is life, and where do I fit in? This love of the search for Truth is what I took with me when I left CRMS in 1964. I am grateful I was acquainted with the founders, John and Anne Holden. I see them as modern-day seekers of Truth, crossing the nation from Vermont to Colorado to realize their idea, utilizing their skills and gifts to remove obstacles so that any student could discover his or her “best self” in a safe and beautiful natural setting.

CRMS also provided me with my first feeling of “community.” In my subsequent academic experiences, I never again encountered the same feeling of community. I have continued to seek and duplicate that feeling ever since.

In conclusion, let me mention something I have gleaned from the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science. In her book, *Pulpit and Press*, she explains how funds were raised during troubled economic times to build The First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston, Massachusetts. The word went out that funds were needed, and the money came in. Eddy says, “There was no urging, begging, or borrowing; only the need made known, and forth came the money, or diamonds, which served to erect this ‘miracle in stone.’”

Not only is it important for individuals to stay connected with those they care about, organizations also need promotion and the ability to connect with those who want to help them in some way. Many people worry about asking others for things that are needed for worthy projects because they have a mistaken sense that they are asking for themselves rather than for an ideal of Truth. Once I understood the wisdom imparted above, I felt free to learn the reason that the organization is asking for funds or donations, and if I believe it to be true, I do not concern myself with what the answer will be. My job is done when I let people know of an honest need. So if you are selected by an organization you care about to help with fundraising, remember these guidelines for staying relaxed: speak about what you really know, be sincere and genuinely interested, be persuaded yourself of the true value, speak of the need, and watch the rest take care of itself.

Honest communication is an elixir beyond what the world knows.