

Understanding the power of the dollar

Amanda Giacalone – For the Estes Park Trail-Gazette

Posted: 02/25/2010 02:57:15 PM MST

There are many clichés about donations -- Every cent counts; a dollar makes a difference; no donation is too small; the power of a dollar. Sure, they`re short and sweet one-liners used for marketing purposes, but they`re actually true.

One very cold, snowy morning this winter (boy, it`s been a cold winter) my friend Christine was waiting in line at a local drug store where she stopped to pick up a quick, last minute card for a friend facing some personal difficulties. She was on her way to work and in a bit of a hurry. When she got to the counter, an elderly couple stood ahead of her at the counter to pay for the items in their shopping basket. The couple was debating whether the pound of sugar they were buying was \$2.99 or \$1.99, like the advertisement supposedly stated. It took ten minutes, yes, 10 minutes, for them to resolve the matter and grant the couple the \$1 savings on their bag of sugar.

There are three lessons my friend Christine took from this 10-minute stop. She shared her experience with me because it was one of those moments that made her think twice about time, money and people in our community.

We are all in a hurry many times these days. Being in a rush leads to impatience and unnecessary stress for you and anyone you encounter. The first lesson she learned was patience. She stopped, took three deep breaths and while on the second breath was wavering on whether she should just come back another time. But by the third breath, she developed enough patience to stay put.

Her impatience was still doing the talking in her head, "It`s a dollar! Just pay the extra dollar and be done with your purchase." But when my friend began to shift her thinking, she realized this was not only a lesson in reserving judgment but also in financial responsibility.

What if this one-dollar was the difference in this couple being able to afford medication this month, she thought. Perhaps the dollar would be the difference in being able to afford a loaf of bread for the week. Christine`s judgment passed and quickly turned to her own struggles with finances. She asked herself, "what if I respected my money so much that I worried about or valued a dollar?"

My friend`s story resonated with me. At United Way of Larimer County, when we tell you that no donation is too small and that every dollar counts, it`s true. The power of a dollar can be the difference between a family having food on the table or not, or that same family having their heat shut off this winter.

For many of us, pennies are something we throw in a fountain or give away. One-dollar bills are no big deal to loan to someone who wants a soda or snack from the vending machine. When the person who borrows the dollar says, "I`ll pay you back." Often times we respond with "don`t worry about it."

But what if we valued and respected that dollar, like the elderly couple at the store? So the next time you are about to put a dollar in a vending machine or buy a soda, think about the power of that dollar. And the next time you see the phrase "no donation is too small" - know that it`s true at United Way of Larimer County.