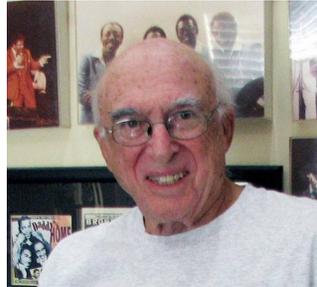


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Is there still a place for kindness and compassion? | Opinion

By Steve West
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Steve West (Mort Mazor/Courtesy/South Florida Sun Sentinel)

At this time of division and discord, Palm Beach County can be proud of its homegrown IN-CROWD Movement. Many community leaders and residents have unified in common purpose to take positive action to assist our underserved neighbors by providing opportunities to help them lift themselves to reach their highest potential. If this sounds idealistic or overambitious, It isn't. It's totally within our collective reach — if we join hands and work together, this American aspiration will be fulfilled.

Think of the resources we have in Palm Beach County. Over 70,000 millionaire families reside here, with 44 billionaires sprinkled amongst their midst, according to various reports.

At the same time and place, over 10% of us are struggling to survive in the strangling grasp of poverty, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. So many of our neighbors are going hungry and are bereft of other basic resources. It's even more heartbreaking to know that 17% of our county's children are food insecure, according to [Feeding America](#).

While there's an abundance of poverty living alongside an abundance of prosperity, most of us are neither billionaires nor poverty stricken. We have enough to more or less fill our needs. We're justifiably concerned about our own family's future well-being in these uncertain times, many of us therefore guard our resources, thinking that we must take care of ourselves because there is not enough for everyone to thrive. See below why you don't have to open your wallet to open your heart. You can do your share with your mind and your hands.

Our programs are designed to work together synergistically to open up opportunities and access for our underserved sisters and brothers to help them achieve self-sufficiency. Here are three areas that you can get involved in:

Love Your Neighbor helps people get things they need now to improve their quality of life. Just think of the gently used useful items sitting idle and forgotten in your closets and garage. This neglected excess can fill another family's needs. We've already brought tons of all kinds of needed goods — from kitchenware to furniture, clothing to small appliances — from people who give directly to people in need. Your clutter will be another's treasure.

The IN-CROWD University - It's not just things needed now. It's also knowledge, ideas and tools for people to improve their own situation in life. The ICU provides underserved neighbors the opportunity to improve their future by providing useful information, training and employment opportunities. Courses include ESL language, financial, health, job training and anything that will help people help themselves to move upward. Consider being a mentor or instructor.

Building Bridges - The Volunteer Force provides large numbers of volunteers to underserved communities as well as the scores of agencies and organizations in Palm Beach County, which work to help people help themselves to self-sufficiency. Volunteers of all kinds are wanted. We're looking for a savvy social media volunteer now.

There's much to be done. If you want to make a real difference, visit thein-crowd.org or email steve@thein-crowd.org. You'll find many opportunities to personally fill a need and fulfill yourself.

Steve West is a social justice advocate and entrepreneur living in Delray Beach.