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SHERMAN FREDERICK: Do-gooders: Who needs 'em?

We all do, that's who

This may seem like a "little" story. But give it a chance. It's important.

First, let me tell you what the story's not about. It's not about an elected official helping a constituent. And, it's not about big government bureaucracy oiling the squeaky wheel.

While both happened, to be sure, this is a story about personal responsibility ... about what it is to be a good citizen looking out for others in the community.

It's about Bill Hummel, an average Joe Las Vegas. He lives in the northwest and often uses the intersection of Ann Road and the Las Vegas Beltway. As traffic through the intersection became heavier, he noted the increasing danger at the intersection, recognized a logical fix to the problem ... and did something about it.

He sent this e-mail to his local elected official, who happened to be County Commissioner Chip Maxfield.

"Dear Chip," he wrote.

"Imagine driving north on the 215 approaching the Ann Road intersection, and as you are about to turn right and proceed east, you move your vehicle into the right lane, closer to where there should be a right-turn lane. The vehicle following you does not slow since the driver assumes you'll be making your right turn soon so the following vehicle can drive through the intersection.

"What I see happening frequently is a 'close call' accident that did not happen -- luckily.

"What does it take to have a right turn lane installed on the 215 northbound lane turning onto Ann Road?

"Where do we go from here?

"There have been a number of accidents at this intersection and a couple of deaths (two Centennial High School students).

"Your follow-through regarding this matter will be appreciated.

"Respectfully yours,

"William R. Hummel."

Bill's e-mail found its way to Cheri Perlman in Maxfield's office. She routed it to the county Public Works Department. The folks there checked it out and saw what Bill saw.

Denis Cederburg, the director of public works, wrote Bill back and said "We will add additional pavement to create a northbound to eastbound right turn lane."

Which they did.

The so-called sophisticated brokers of political power in Las Vegas and the jaded myopic media birds who follow them might respond to this "little" story with derision.

"Jeez, Mr. Review-Journal, what's the big deal?" I can hear them say. "A politician helping a voter? What do you want us to do, break out singing 'Glory, glory hallelujah'?"

Frankly, I don't care what they think, or sing. This isn't about politics, though I give Maxfield's office and county government credit for their actions.

This is about good citizenship. Bill Hummel, you see, is my neighbor. I've also travelled that intersection many, many times. And each time I've done so I've thought to myself, "Man, oh man, this intersection needs a right-hand turn lane before somebody gets killed."

But that's all I did. I just complained silently to myself.

Not Bill Hummel, thank goodness. He did something. And as a result the intersection at Ann Road and the Beltway is better.

I am safer.

My kids are safer.

So, here's to all of the Bill Hummels out there. My neighborhood, my community, my state, my nation and my world are better off because of all the plain ol' folks who see a problem and won't take "no" for an answer until something is done.

As far as I'm concerned, that's no "little" story.

That's "the" story.

A good deed

Looking for something good to do this fall? Try this: St. Jude's Ranch for Children in Boulder City rescues abused, abandoned or neglected children. (Full disclosure: I sit on its board.)

We care for about 120 kids most any given night. The state pays St. Jude's about half of what it costs to care for a child. So fundraising is a necessity.

It costs about \$25 to feed a child at St. Jude's for a week. Next time you go out to eat, how about reserving a little something (say, 10 percent of the total check) for a kid at St. Jude's. Just send it to St. Jude's Ranch for Children, 100 St. Jude's St., Boulder City, NV 89005. I promise you, it will be put to very good use.

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