

Be the change, do something
[WUNT March 2009]

This morning, I watched with overwhelming emotion as our new President took the podium and spoke with both hope and realism of the work that lies ahead for our nation's recovery. It is my personal opinion that, no matter what your politics, it's hard not to be inspired by the optimism of Barack Obama. Policies and issues are one thing, but his overall message of hope is hard to resist. The idea that America can recover and change if we simply unite and work together is an infectious truth, no matter which side you stand on. It is the cornerstone of nearly every religion and the Golden Rule we learn in grade school: we are put on this earth to love and help one another. After all, it's not as if the alternative has ever done any good. Obama himself put this theory into practice the day before his inauguration by volunteering in honor of Martin Luther King day. He urged the nation to do the same, thousands followed suit.

As the new year began, I set about making resolutions for a better me. This year, even before the service day on MLK, one of my promises to myself was to dedicate my time to a cause that I believe in. But saying you want to do something and actually doing it are two different beasts; research must be done and causes must be chosen. So, in the spirit of working together for a better future, and in honor of a new year, a new President, and a new beginning, here are some starter ideas of where and how to help out:

USA Service-www.usaservice.org

This website, designed to promote Obama's call to service year-round, includes links to volunteer organizations as well as the resources to host your very own service event in your area.

Volunteer Indiana-www.in.gov/ofbci/volunteer/

Speaking of your area, good old Indy has it's very own site dedicated to finding volunteer opportunities. Check out the county-by-county map to find the centers nearest you.

The Presidential Pledge-www.myspace.com/presidentialpledge

This Myspace site, created in partnership with Ashton Kutcher's Katalyst Productions, encourages video submissions of your pledge and includes a list of celebrity-endorsed causes to get you started.

Idealist.org-www.idealists.org

A project of Action Without Borders, this site offers an exchange of information between volunteers and organizations as well as blogs, videos, and podcasts relating to volunteer topics. Need to feed your wanderlust? Check out their Volunteer Abroad opportunities and do some good while you travel.

Do Something-www.dosomething.org

Targeted at teens, but still a great resource, this site offers games, links, and inspiration on how to help out at school, at home, online, and in your neighborhood. Techie bonus: sign up to get local volunteer opportunities sent via text to your phone.

So there you have it, a small start on how you can be the change you seek. This year, we can all resolve to stop complaining about the situation and do something to change it. Or, in the words of Anne Frank, "no one need wait a single moment to improve the world." We each have the power to bring about hope, so find your cause and do something.