



Everyday Heroes, by Reader Digest

Nancy Rivard lost her 54-year-old father suddenly to bladder cancer on Christmas Eve 1983. "I wondered what life was about that it could be taken from us like that," she recalls. "I began to evaluate where I was going." Rivard purposely got herself demoted from the management track at American Airlines and went to working as a flight attendant. With low-cost travel passes and a flexible schedule, she toured around the world, searching for a calling -- for healing. "I kept asking, how can I make a difference?" she says. An idea emerged: volunteers could deliver medical supplies, school materials and plain old love to needy children in the United States and abroad, traveling at the same low fares airline employees receive. Rivard started small, collecting sample-size hotel soaps and shampoo from her co-workers and delivering them to Bosnian refugees. The recipients were so grateful they cried. Other flight attendants asked how they could get involved, and Rivard slowly built a network of volunteers she called Airline Ambassadors. "I knew that if I could expose people to the types of helping experiences I'd had, they would find the same joy and fulfillment," she says. Since 1996, when the group was founded, more than 3000 volunteers have delivered over \$6 million worth of donated food, toys, blankets, clothing and other supplies to Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and elsewhere. [...] "Nancy told me I've got to stop being surprised by this," says flight attendant Rambacher. "When you do good work, doors keep opening." -- Jane Meredith Adams
Reader's Digest, June 2001