



Van Wanted

“Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.”

Will President Barack Obama’s inaugural address be remembered (or forgotten) as just another political speech, or will it become a famous call to action—one that motivated millions of Americans to roll up their sleeves and pitch in? The answer, of course, is up to us. Have we become a people who stand on the sidelines, or do we join the fight?

I’m betting that here in Bloomington we join the fight. That’s the kind of community this is. For those of you who aren’t quite sure what to do, here are some suggestions.

- Volunteer. The city has a terrific volunteer network program (349-3433), which offers literally hundreds of opportunities to get involved. Staff there will help you choose work that you will enjoy and that will best use your skills. RSVP is a separate volunteer program just for seniors. It’s terrific too. (See our story on page 40.)

- Give generously to good causes. Giving a token amount of money is easy: You don’t feel the pinch, you use it as a tax deduction, and it makes you feel virtuous for a couple of minutes (though not really). But “easy” is not good enough in these tough times. If giving is what you mainly do, give until you feel it.

- Support local businesses. The people who own local businesses are your neighbors. The people they employ are your neighbors. If Bloomington has one less McDonald’s, that’s no big deal. But to lose one local restaurant

(or gift shop or gallery or clothing store) means someone’s dream has been swept away, and that we have lost a little bit of what makes Bloomington Bloomington.

- If you own a local business, don’t lay off anyone—unless the alternative is going out of business. Letting go of hard-working, loyal employees should be your absolute last resort (as opposed to large corporations that will lay off thousands then spend a million dollars re-decorating the CEO’s office). Local businesses can also help out by donating their products or services to charitable organizations.

A propos of that last point, has anyone out there got a good used box van or truck to spare? Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard, which operates a food pantry currently serving 2,000 folks a week, is in desperate need of one (see notice, page 110). Surely, there is a car dealership or other business that will lend a hand. This is Bloomington after all.

Note: Due to these challenging times, we have taken out our “60 Days or so” events calendar from the magazine. We chose to sacrifice the calendar because there are other places where this information is available. Also not in this issue is our regular “20 Questions” feature and our “Letters” page. These will appear intermittently in future issues. We plan to restore everything to every issue when times improve—which we believe they surely will.

Malcolm Abrams
editor and publisher