three days before Christmas last year, a generous donor called me and asked, “If I give you several thousand dollars in $100 bills, will you go out and randomly surprise people in need like ‘Secret Santa?’”

“Of course,” I replied.

It was an interesting experience to say the least. Surprising people at bus stops or laundromats or workers at minimum wage jobs with a $100 bill nearly always brought tremendous joy. More than a few broke down in tears.

My wife and I intentionally went out on Christmas morning. I told her, “Let’s look for people who are walking alone. Anyone who is alone on Christmas morning is really alone in life.” We encountered quite a few people who were walking….all alone. The way one woman was walking communicated depression: her head was bowed down and she was plodding along more than walking. After we surprised her with a $100 bill and a Christmas greeting, she literally started skipping down the street. It was a wonderful sight to see.

Recently, we interviewed some of the people who come to our community kitchen on weekday nights for a hot meal. We asked them to finish this sentence: “I come here to this kitchen for….” Though all of them mentioned a hot meal, they also mentioned that they come to be around the people. Those we randomly interviewed live alone. Some even referred to their fellow diners as “my family.”

All of those who are poor have some material need, but some also lack something much deeper, a connection to another person. It is this latter need that we all have, regardless of income.

The dining experience that takes place every weekday is more than about food; it’s a reminder to those who come that they are not alone.

Christmas is God’s reminder to us that we are not alone. If we really believed and understood that, then like that woman last Christmas morning, we too would probably start skipping down the street!

“And his name shall be Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” Isaiah 7:14
“Sincerely, the ones you helped”

On your left, the mother who wrote this note became seriously injured at work. While she was recovering, her family was on the brink of homelessness. Through your generosity, they have a roof over their head tonight.

On your right, this mother is starting her life over after fleeing domestic violence. She now can keep her children safe and start her new job.

Would you like to Help One move forward?
Visit www.bishopsullivan.org/help-one

Tax Credits Available for Donations

The State of Missouri, in its effort to support people in need of food, offers a tax credit - better than a mere deduction - to any Missouri tax filer who donates money to a food pantry in Missouri. Bishop Sullivan Center operates two large food pantries, and therefore, donations here qualify.

The state has set aside a little more than a million dollars to give back to such donors. According to the Missouri Department of Revenue website, “Any taxpayer (individual, corporation, or trust) that makes a donation of cash or food supplies to a food pantry may receive a credit of up to $2,500 per taxpayer per year. The taxpayer may take a credit of 50 percent of their donations.” For more details, go to bishopsullivan.org/missouri-tax-credit or consult your tax advisor.

Each month, about 1,200 families visit one of our two food pantries for groceries.