

SMALLTALK

about big ideas

Heroes Wear Hard Hats

By Jennifer Boykin

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In the song “Heroes” by rock legend David Bowie, he sings, “We can be heroes, just for one day.”

A few weeks ago, shipbuilders Mike Oblein (X84) and Curtis Willis (X84), brought Bowie’s song to life.

The two men were making a material run to West Park and noticed a vehicle on the side of Hampton Roads Center Parkway, its driver slumped over in her seat. They continued to West Park, and on the return trip they stopped after observing the same vehicle.

Mike and Curtis knocked on the window, and the driver was coherent enough to unlock the door. Mike asked if the woman was diabetic, a fact she confirmed before passing out.

The driver was experiencing a diabetic blood sugar crash.

Curtis called 911 and the Hampton Fire Department responded within a few minutes. They stabilized the woman with a glucose shot and told the shipbuilders that if they had not stopped, the driver would have died within 30 minutes.

The selflessness that these shipbuilders demonstrated in their quick decision to stop and take action saved a woman’s life. It is nothing short of heroic.

We have heroes like Curtis and Mike all around us. Heroes don’t have to have famous names or super powers. In the words of Maya Angelou, “a hero is any person really intent on making this a better place for all people.”

It’s about paying it forward—contributing toward a cause much larger than ourselves. Shipbuilders, by nature, are giving people. We contribute to a greater cause every day with the ships that we build. But we do more than that. Every year, we build Habitat for Humanity houses, coach Little League baseball teams and volunteer countless hours in area classrooms building our future shipbuilders.

We build more than ships. We help to build our community.

As we gather with our families and friends to give thanks for our many blessings this week, consider how you might be someone’s hero.

The shipyard offers many opportunities to pay it forward. The “ONE CAN Make a Difference” holiday food drive begins Dec. 3, encouraging all 23,000 shipbuilders to bring in at least one can of food to be donated to the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank. SEEKnns, formerly known as Career Pathways, is recruiting volunteers for a number of upcoming STEM activities in our schools, and Angel Trees are popping up behind our gates and across our community that offer opportunities to give to our neighbors in need.

Like David Bowie, I believe we can all be heroes – and not just for one day. I am thankful for the giving spirit of Mike and Curtis and all of our shipbuilders. You inspire me every day, and I wish you all a safe, restful and happy Thanksgiving!

