

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED THE GUY THAT CLEANS UP YOUR TRASH?

by Jeff Kempker

There is a show on CNN with Mike Rowe called "Somebody's Gotta Do It." I haven't watched a single episode but I can gather from the previews it's about jobs that are necessary, but not glamorous.

One such job would be cleaning up other peoples' garbage. The only thing that could possibly be worse would be cleaning out portable toilets. I should know, as I happen to be very experienced in this area because of a job I had as a teenager working for a rental company. It's gross. Really, really gross. In fact, I have had several jobs that would probably qualify for Mr. Rowe's show. Maybe that's why I have such a deep appreciation for the people that do the work no one else wants to do.

Have you ever noticed the guy that cleans up your trash? I mean really noticed him? I have, and his name is Joe.

On my daughter's second birthday we were enjoying a beautiful April morning at one of the local city parks. It was a Monday, and there was still some trash blowing around from the weekend and the garbage barrels were overflowing. The sight of the trash bothered me. So much so that it became difficult for me to concentrate on having fun with my family thinking about the



inconsiderate litter bugs soiling my little girl's birthday!

Just as my annoyance was about to reach the point where I started picking up the trash myself, a middle-aged man in a neon yellow shirt and mesh-back cap appeared. He worked quickly, silently and alone. I'm not sure if he noticed us, but I couldn't take my eyes off him as he gathered up all the garbage that was blowing about the grass. Then, just as quickly and silently, he emptied all the garbage barrels. I wanted so badly to thank him for his service but, all of a sudden, he was gone, leaving a clean park and happy family behind.

Why did I think this was so remarkable? Was it the efficiency and pride of how he went about doing a job that no one else wants to do? Definitely.

But more importantly I felt that this man had played a part in making my princess' birthday a little more special. Providing a clean, attractive, safe place for her to play and enjoy her birthday meant something to me.

I found out later that man's name is Joe and he has been cleaning the parks in my community for almost 40 years. Joe is a public employee that performs a much-needed service for the citizens of his town. While there are many others like him, Joe provides a shining

example of the value of the public sector worker to our communities.

Why has he done his job so well for so long? We decided to talk to Joe, and in so many words his response was, "Somebody's gotta do it."

Watch our conversation with Joe to learn more about the value he provides to his community. And to all the other 'Joes' out there, thank you!

Watch the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9K6YENVc8w&feature=youtu.be&list=UU4V6yze1t_7v7SosaBEKftQ. □

Jeff Kempker is the manager of member services at Missouri Local Government Employees Retirement System. Visit www.molagers.org for more information.



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