

## Have You Seen George And Mary Bailey?

Judge Philip J. Van de Veer



No doubt about it, George and Mary Bailey are making Pend Oreille County a better place to live. In case you haven't met the Baileys, they will soon make their yearly TV appearance in the movie It's a Wonderful Life starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed.

This is the story of George Bailey, a local boy who dreams of getting out of rustic Bedford Falls to see the world. Unfortunately, George's father dies, and George winds up staying to run the local Bailey Building and Loan. After years

of struggle, events take a turn for the worse, and George despairs that his life has been for nothing. In response, God dispatches Clarence Oddbody, angel in training, and George is given the gift of seeing that Bedford Falls would have been a meaner and darker community had he never been part of that community.

Each of us benefits from the George and Mary Baileys in our community who give back more than they receive. Some volunteer at school, hospital, library, food bank, senior center, crisis network, Habitat, and Watchdogs. Others support youth sports, after-school programs, scouts, 4-H, and parent teacher associations. Still others promote the arts with organizations such as the Cutter Theater, Northwoods and Create. Local church members provide community outreach such as the Newport Youth Center, Royal Rangers and Awanas while many residents contribute through service organizations like the Rotary, Soroptimists, Chamber, Kiwanis, Lions, Eagles, V.F.W., Legion and the Grange. Some serve as volunteer firefighters, reserve officers, or on one of the many county boards and commissions. Finally, there are all those neighbors who are ready to help a neighbor.

I am not so naïve as to think that the George and Mary Baileys of my community will eliminate crime or solve every problem. But I do know their presence has a tremendous and positive impact for which I am thankful. I know this because I have seen what happens in a community when there are too few Baileys. Perhaps they moved, or passed away, or grew weary, and nobody has taken their place. That's when Bedford Falls turns into Pottersville.

If you haven't seen It's a Wonderful Life, look for it on the tube this Christmas or rent it from the local video store. Then look around and notice all the people who daily help to make Diamond Lake, Newport, Usk, Cusick, Ione, Metaline, and Metaline Falls a better place. And, should you notice that your local shire is short on Baileys, you might just want to get involved. It would certainly make my job easier.

