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WE Are The World

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Ever notice how some songs stay with you, play over and over again in your head? We Are the World, a song written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie 25 years ago and remade this year by Quincy Jones is such a song for me. It premiered with over 100 singers at the February Olympic opening ceremonies in Vancouver, Canada with proceeds from song sales going to Haiti. The Olympics seem the perfect example of brotherhood in our ever-increasing small world. More than athletic competition, the Olympic games showcase everything good in this human family--passion, spirit, dreams, courage, sacrifice, achievement, sportsmanship and hope. Nothing reminds us more of this than the opening and closing ceremonies where athletes of all cultures, creeds and religions from around the globe come together.

Oregon writer Kim Stafford says in his book *The Muses Among Us*, "For we have left the time of the stranger behind, the time when it was okay not to know how it is for people far away who suffer. Now each life becomes ambassador to all by hearing and speaking local visions, poems, stories and songs."

Besides hearing and speaking local visions, I ask myself what each of us can do in our families, neighborhoods, country and world to make an impact.

Walking along the country road I live on, I notice two red-tailed hawks gracefully soaring and gliding in wide slowly turning circles above an open field. Wish I could do that. I can't, of course, but I can do some things like take steps to help save their habitat. I can make my voice heard as I did recently when I called my senators about passing a clean air bill and my congressional representative with my opinion on the Fair Elections Now Act.

In addition to Haiti and Chile earthquake relief funds, there are numerous outstanding aid groups needing support such as UNICEF, Mercy Corps and Habitat for Humanity. My preference is to make small loans to Kiva.org, a micro-financing program dedicated to alleviating poverty throughout the global community. Many groups specialize in supporting women in developing countries such as Women For Women International, an organization that helps women in war-torn regions rebuild their lives. For more information about aid groups see charitynavigator.org and givewell.net.

As for family, I mail my grandsons a letter with coins pasted in carrying on a tradition their great-grandfather started for my children. Like the lost art of conversation or sitting down to immerse oneself in a piece of music, letter writing seems to be another thing on the endangered pleasures list. For my neighbors, I take one a pot of homemade soup and give another a spring bouquet from the garden. I deliver book donations to the community library and take other items to the Hope Chest and Cart'M. I spend my dollars at local businesses and volunteer where needed.

It's up to us. It doesn't take much but by reaching out with calls to our leaders, a helping hand to those in need, or with simple gestures like a pot of soup or a handwritten note, along with our poems, stories and songs, we can become good ambassadors for our communities, country and world.

The opening ceremonies of the 2010 Olympics were dedicated to Georgian Nodar Kumaritashvili who died earlier that day when he lost control of his luge during a practice run. The

community of athletes as well as those of us watching from afar paused and held a moment of silence to honor the life of a young man with passion and dreams. To an athlete dying young, an Olympian we don't even know from the other side of the world, we give reverence. We stop, take notice, feel the impact.

The world is troubled in many ways, and we often wonder what we can do. For me it comes down to a simple task. I do what I can where I can, and I carry with me the words from the song We Are the World:

We are the world.

We are the children.

We are the ones to make a better day.

Just you and me.