

As I sat down at the table to consume a sizable bowl of corn flakes, I read the large, bold headline on the front page of the newspaper. "Cleveland No. 1 in big-city poverty," the headline read.

"Oh, great," I muttered to myself. "Now the world will see that I live in the country's poorest city."

I felt embarrassed and angry. This was something for which I didn't want my city to be known. I wanted to stick a "for sale" sign in my front yard and get out of town.

The story, which appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, said that nearly one-third of Clevelanders, half of them children, live in poverty. My city beat out Newark, N.J., and Detroit — two cities I had always viewed as more destitute with a capital "D" — for the notorious honor.

After a few minutes, however, I felt guilty for feeling embarrassed about my city. This wasn't about me. It was about a lot of people who are less fortunate than me. I realized that wanting to get away from the "problem" was selfish and hardly a solution. More importantly, I realized that the poor are everywhere, and they need our help.

I thought of the industry of which I'm employed. The golf industry is stamped with a well-to-do label, and the sport is viewed as a rich man's game. Even if you don't like those stereotypes, one thing is for sure: Most of us in the industry are extremely fortunate to have what we have. That's not to take anything away from those who have worked hard for their achievements — but they're still fortunate.

That said, I've been thinking about how we can help the less fortunate. I have some ideas I thought I'd share with you — things you can do at your courses to raise money or collect food for the needy. I realize I'm pitching this message just as the holidays are looming, which is not intended. This message needs to be heard year-round because the poor need to be helped year-round.

There are many events your course can hold to raise money. These fund-raisers also don't take much planning. In fact, an event could be as easy as placing a golf bag at the pro shop's door with a sign that asks golfers to fill it

Some Ways We Can Help the Poor

BY LARRY AYLWARD



THERE ARE MANY
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up with money so it can be donated to a nearby soup kitchen.

Your course could also stage a charity tournament featuring local celebrities, such as ex-professional athletes, and give proceeds to the local homeless shelter. Do you know how much some guys and gals would pay to play a few holes with the town's former star quarterback or starting pitcher?

Do you have room in the maintenance facility to store canned goods or clothes? If so, you might want to consider a canned-food or a clothing drive. Tell golfers you'll give them free buckets of balls to hit on the range if they donate their old pants and polo shirts. Give them each a hot dog and a Coke at the halfway house for donating five cans of food.

The maintenance staff could also get together and sponsor a child in the Christian Children's fund or a similar organization. Or the staff could pool some money and buy food and presents for a local needy family this Christmas.

Raffles are also a good option to raise money. A course could raise hundreds of dollars just by raffling off a few rounds of golf or a couple of the club's swank golf shirts. A course could also hold longest-drive or closest-to-the-pin contests to raise cash.

A lot of people want to help the needy, but they don't know what to do. They think they have to spend a lot of time and energy — something everybody seems to be short on these days — to oversee a fund-raiser, which is not the case.

I'm just scratching the surface with ideas to raise money. I'd love to hear your thoughts on the matter, and I'll gladly pass them on to our readers. Please drop me an e-mail at laylward@advanstar.com and we'll publish your ideas on how to help the poor in an upcoming issue.

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