

What can I do to help you?

by Beverly Denver

Recently, a well-respected and highly successful woman in this city did something truly amazing for me and Houston Woman Magazine. It happened at Table Talk, the annual fund-raising luncheon for the University of Houston's Women's Studies Department. That woman, Donna Fujimoto Cole of Cole Chemical & Distributing, Inc., was leading the discussions at the table where I was seated.

During lunch, she threw out these questions for each of us to answer: What do you need right now? How can the rest of us help you?

Instead of my normal (and predictable) response, "More advertising support for Houston Woman Magazine, hundreds of new subscribers," I surprised myself by saying, "Office space. Our lease expires in three days, and, after that, we have no place to go."

Before I could offer an explanation of why that was so, I heard these words, "No problem; I can help you. I have office space I'm leasing, but not using. It's yours, free of charge, for the next six months. Use it. You won't have to rush into signing a new lease somewhere else right now."

My immediate reaction was mixed. I thought: "That's so nice of her, but I couldn't possibly accept her offer. It's just too generous! This woman doesn't even know me. Why would she want to help me — and in such a big way?"

Before I left the luncheon that day, Donna pulled me aside and said, "I was serious about the office space. I also have some tables and chairs you can use if you need them. Think about it."

I left the Hilton Americas Hotel that day promising to do just that.

For the next few days, I kept thinking about synchronicity (The experience of two or more unrelated events occurring together in a meaningful manner.) and how it played into my being put in position to ponder Donna's offer.

You see, I wasn't feeling so well that afternoon; I was suffering from a sinus headache that wouldn't quit. (Also, I was having a very bad hair day, and the skirt I had on felt unusually tight around the waist. My fingers were swollen.) I had to push myself to even get to the Table Talk event. I kept telling myself, "You confirmed your reservation;

people are counting on you. Walk the talk. Just show up.”

And, Donna wasn't even supposed to be there. She was filling in as the featured conversationalist for Sue Burnett of Burnett Staffing, Inc., who (coincidentally) was needed in Austin that day.

Synchronicity? Haven't I always said we need to pay attention to it when it happens? Yes, indeed!

Well, as you have surely guessed by now, I finally said “yes” to Donna Cole's proposition. And, I'm delighted to report that, just recently, Houston Woman Magazine has taken up temporary residence in beautiful new spaces in Ashford VII — just off I-10, in the Energy Corridor. My team and I are excited about being in a place we never planned to be and, possibly, meeting all those new people who will be coming into our lives.

Over the past month, I've learned a whole lot about Donna Cole. One special thing I've discovered is what many others in our city already knew: She is genuinely warm and friendly, uniquely kind and truly interested in helping other people - even women! Helping other women actually makes her very, very happy!

So, today, I want to openly express my gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to Donna Cole and to women like her who truly do pay it forward.

They inspire us all to show more interest in the challenges of others and ask, “What do you need right now? What can I do to help you?”

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