

## **In the Spotlight: America at its best**

**By John F. Gilligan**

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Americans typically associate the first Thanksgiving Day with the Pilgrims who stepped on Plymouth Rock in 1621. Yet there were many earlier thanksgiving days in America. And those started in 1607 at Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in North America.

Few recall or even know much about those thanksgivings. One reason for this oversight is that most of the historical narratives about Thanksgiving occurred after the Civil War and were written by northern historians. It's the victors who write history. And they were far more enchanted by the New England puritans in contrast to the retrograde southerners as our nation's bedrock.

That's clearly a lopsided story. Furthermore, the fact is that from the time of the first settlers at Jamestown, then at Plymouth and then throughout the colonies that gave birth to the United States, there were thanksgivings everywhere. And they were more often than not celebrated for having survived natural disasters, tragedies, famines and epidemics.

Americans had forged a habit in times of great need of coming together to help one another and pray to God. It has become part of our American character to do so.

And is this not what we have witnessed these past 11 days with our own being — eyes, ears, hands, feet, tears, hugs, prayers and grief? Families, friends, neighbors and citizens from the Tri-County Area and from other parts of the U.S. have come together to help. This has been America at its best.

Aristotle's observation that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts is as true today as it was 2,300 years ago. It's a concept too often ignored. Yet the principle has been quite active this past week.

Here's just one example among so many of how it works in real life. WTVP hosted a Tornado Relief Telethon with the other local stations: WEEK, WHOI, WMBD, WYZZ and WAOE. It was the first team approach by highly competitive institutions to achieve a common good for the people of our community — creating a whole greater than the sum of its parts.

During that three-plus hour telethon, more than three-quarters of a million dollars were raised to help our fellow citizens. And the calls continue to come in.

This is how our country was built and is sustained: American people helping one another, building our communities and nation together. It's something that is indeed worth celebrating this Thanksgiving Day of 2013.

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