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Where is the Leadership?

John F. Kennedy. Abraham Lincoln. George Washington. Ask people who they think are great leaders, the answer is more than likely going to be one of these men or other politicians from the past. But what about today? Why do so many citizens harbor negativity towards the leadership of our nation today? What so many fail to comprehend is that amid the job losses, soaring gas prices, and stock market scares, leadership similar to those of the past still exist.

Under the blistering sun in Afghanistan, American soldiers fight for the protection and rights of our country and of innocent civilians. As a platoon carries out a mission, the commanding officer and several others are killed. A lieutenant, knowing the danger, steps up and leads his remaining comrades to finish their mission. He aids many people he doesn't even know in the process. Isn't that leadership?

A women's basketball team is losing mercilessly to a rival. Most of the girls are discouraged. One athlete begins to complement her crestfallen teammates. Slowly her encouragements and suggestions rebuild their fallen morale. The team listens to the athlete's helpful tips to tie the game. The optimistic athlete scores the winning goal. Isn't that leadership?

A playground that has been around for generations is scheduled to be demolished for a strip mall. A teenager reminisces about his jovial adventures on the playground as a boy. The thought of the cheerful venue vanishing forever is hard to bear. He finds many others feel the same way. Steadfast, the boy initiates a petition to save the park. He creates fliers, publicizes the protests, and marches around the playground in protest daily. His efforts save it. Isn't that leadership?

A man sees his nephew exhibiting increasingly delinquent behavior. He decides to intervene. The man teaches his nephew to hunt and fish. He helps him study for school and helps him practice football. He listens to his nephew's opinions. His nephew graduates top of his class and football MVP. Isn't that leadership?

A principal wants to improve her school. She inquires about her co-workers complaints and invites parents to meetings to discuss their desires. She even surveys the students' opinions. She considers each request, no matter the significance. She compiles the requests. She administers new renovations. Improves athletic venues and equipment. Gives more recognition to academic achievements. Broadens curriculum choices. Isn't that leadership?

A football coach takes on a team with a losing record. He works with the players and builds a bond. He figures out which plays work well. He determines which players sync well with each other. When they are trailing, his desire to win swells. His shouts across the field are to encourage or correct the players. The team goes on to achieve a winning season. Isn't that leadership?

All those who complain at the dinner table about the poor leadership in this country are oblivious. Leadership does not fall into the sole category of politics. And leadership is not absent in America today. It is vibrant and thrives everywhere if one looks. In the words of John Quincy Adams, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader."