

Better angels get greater play



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Like most residents in Shanghai, I have been confined to my home since April 1, some since March 28, while the city tries to control the spread of the COVID-19 to the greatest extent feasible.

A timely and temporary shut-down can help keep infections at bay by reducing interpersonal communication.

Many people may find their daily lives more inconvenient than usual during such a temporary lockdown. Many locals, for example, are concerned about how they will receive adequate vegetables and fruits on a daily basis, as online and offline shops have found their capacity to serve constrained due to rigorous quarantine restrictions.

Yes, worry has weighed on many of us, but we are far from being concerned about our own benefit only. The more I observe what others do — whether they live near me or far away — the more I understand how many people care more about others than about themselves.

On April 18, Xinmin Evening News carried a report saying its senior reporter, Yan

Qiuqiu, purchased 3,000 *jin* (1,500kg) of vegetables from several farmers in the Pudong New Area and donated them to nine elderly homes in Hongkou District.

Yan, like many other locals who are currently confined to their homes, attempted to stockpile food for his family by making one-time offline purchases before the lockdown and occasional online purchases.

He said he was particularly concerned about some elderly who were unable to order food via mobile apps. As a result, he called a number of acquaintances, and eventually, a friend told him that some farmers in Zhuqiao Town might be able to help.

After placing his order with the farmers, Yan found his next challenge was to get the vegetables from Pudong to Hongkou. Only vehicles with special permits are allowed on the streets. A young entrepreneur, born in the 1990s, came to Yan's help. He agreed to deliver the vegetables, but could only accommodate 800 *jin* of vegetables in his licensed car. So he drove back and forth for more than 700 kilometers and delivered the vegetables to the elderly. When Yan offered to pay him, he politely declined.

Yan's story is one of several about ordinary people helping one another get through the difficult times by assisting each other in obtaining daily necessities. The government has gone to great lengths to ensure that everyone has enough basic food, and individual purchases can be beneficial for people with specific needs.

Yan, for example, said that many elderly people require more vegetables than seafood or meat.

He said he compared various food packages before deciding to get as many vegetables as possible.



A delivery staffer brings goods to the gate of a locked-down compound in Shanghai. The parcels are disinfected and then delivered to households by community volunteers. — CFP

Unsung heroes

In my own suburban neighborhood, people have started to “donate” various items to one another. It works like this: In a community WeChat group, neighbors share information about their needs, and then property management workers, clothed in protective gear, pick up the item(s) from the “donor” and deliver them to those who requested them. So there is no direct contact between the neighbors.

My wife “donated” a bag of fresh chicken essence to a neighbor we’ve never met. Some conscientious neighbors have even compiled a lengthy list of who has helped whom — a pleasant memento of camaraderie in the face of temporary difficulty.

A neighbor in our WeChat group sent an urgent message the other day, saying his refrigerator was broken. In the current situation, every family relies on a refrigerator to store

food. Another neighbor offered his WeChat contact with a refrigerator manufacturer, claiming that if an order was placed, a timely delivery could be arranged.

My wife and I noticed a new fridge at the front gate of our compound on Monday morning on our way home after a nucleic acid test. When we asked about it, a security guard said they’d transport it to the neighbor who needed a new fridge.

The property management staff are unsung heroes in our community, ensuring that our everyday lives go on as usual. Since April 1, more than 10 of them have slept on the ground of the property management offices. They’ve gone above and beyond their responsibilities as property managers, delivering neighbors’ online orders at midnight or even in the early hours of the morning, and assisting the *juweihui* (neighborhood committee) in distributing “food gift bags”

from the government to everyone.

All of these stories serve as a reminder of what management expert Meg Poag wrote in his new book “The Adversity Hack.”

“Our values and principles are strongly held beliefs that align us with our unique, beautiful higher selves.”

By “higher selves,” he essentially refers to anything other than one’s ego, which is survival-based. In his words, “higher selves” allude to an individual’s inherent proclivity for love, joy, trust, gratitude and wholeness.

I’ve finished several books during the more than two weeks of lockdown; this is one of them. Its philosophy and recommendations could have sounded abstract to me had I not noticed how many individuals in Shanghai have lived out his principles about giving greater play to one’s better angels.