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CHICAGO IMPACT

How *Secret Millionaire* Gave Back

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There are certain opportunities that come along in our lives that we simply cannot pass up. For some us of it may have been that first job offer, the trip of a lifetime or being invited to a rare event. That latter occasion came for me when I was asked to be on ABC's *Secret Millionaire*. I didn't know much about the show at first, but I quickly learned about the program and how it provides a national stage to highlight charities making an impact each and every day in the community. I have donated to charities over the years and, like most people, I honestly haven't volunteered so much of my time or really connected at such a high level with the people or causes I was supporting financially. When it comes down to it, I've never donated to a charity where I was completely immersed.

So, when I got the opportunity to be part of *Secret Millionaire*, I jumped in feet first without hesitation, as interacting with people in hands-on settings is a great way to get involved. When I decided to do the show, my goal was to discover deserving individuals who continually sacrifice everything to help those in need, and ultimately to encourage others to do the same.

Steve Kaplan working with one of the charities featured on the show

For the filming of my episode, I visited an area constantly dealing with gang violence, drugs, poverty and homelessness. During my week-long stay, I survived on welfare level wages while volunteering my time and searching the streets of the community to determine how much of my wealth to gift to the area heroes I met. I came across three amazing organizations along my journey and discovered some of the most selfless people I've ever met.

The experience impacted me on such a visceral level that I established an ongoing relationship with all three charities I met. I have been fortunate to have traveled the world and have witnessed poverty many times, so I knew that the experience I was about to embark on would be full of heartache, tragedy and perhaps even frustration, but I was still amazed and shocked by what I encountered. I dug deep inside myself to find the fortitude to stay positive in such negative situations. I also strove to listen to what those around me were saying so that I could fully understand their needs and hopefully determine how to best help them beyond the monetary donation both then and on an ongoing basis.

The process was life-changing and I'm so excited for the world to share in my journey. To celebrate and continue to give back to these three organizations that give so much, I'd like to personally invite those in Chicago and the surrounding area to join me for a public viewing party for the premiere of my July 1 episode. The event will benefit the three charitable



organizations featured on the show and there will be an opportunity to meet the inspirational folks I met during the program.

For more information, please visit www.stevkaplanlive.com. You can also follow Steve Kaplan on [Twitter](#), and on [Facebook](#).

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