

Your opportunity to do a good deed.

Bill Simon, CEO of Wal-Mart's U.S. business, at a Goldman Sachs [conference last week](#), on behavior at a Walmart store around midnight at the end of a month:

“The paycheck cycle we’ve talked about before remains extreme. It is our responsibility to figure out how to sell in that environment, adjusting pack sizes, large pack at sizes the beginning of the month, small pack sizes at the end of the month. And to figure out how to deal with what is an ever-increasing amount of transactions being paid for with government assistance.

“And you need not go further than one of our stores on midnight at the end of the month. And it’s real interesting to watch, about 11 p.m., customers start to come in and shop, fill their grocery basket with basic items, baby formula, milk, bread, eggs, and continue to shop and mill about the store until midnight, when electronic — government electronic benefits cards get activated and then the checkout starts and occurs. And our sales for those first few hours on the first of the month are substantially and significantly higher.

“And if you really think about it, the only reason somebody gets out in the middle of the night and buys baby formula is that they need it, and they’ve been waiting for it. Otherwise, we are open 24 hours — come at 5 a.m., come at 7 a.m., come at 10 a.m. But if you are there at midnight, you are there for a reason.”

Here is an opportunity for some of us who are doing well in this environment to go to a Wal-Mart store on the last day of the month, an hour or so before midnight. Come ‘dressed down’ and observe the people who are shopping and talk ‘small talk’ to some of them. Be sure you have a few items in your cart so you will be perceived to be a fellow shopper. When you come across a family that is suffering and in your opinion deserving of some help (you can tell a lot from what is in the cart), and ‘as if by coincidence’ meet them at the check-out and offer to pay for whatever they have in their cart.

You’ll be amazed at how good you’ll feel. If you have children who are willing to go along for the lesson, on a ‘non-school day,’ so much the better.