

A Bouquet of Flowers

When I graduated from college I took a job at an insurance company in this huge downtown office building. On my first day, I was escorted to this tiny cubicle surrounded by what seemed like thousands of other tiny cubicles, and put to work doing some meaningless thing. It was so terribly depressing I almost broke down crying. At lunch — after literally punching out on a time clock — all I could think about was how much I wanted to quit, but I couldn't because I desperately needed the money. When I got back to my cubicle after lunch there was a beautiful bouquet of flowers sitting on my desk. For the whole first month I worked there flowers just kept arriving on my desk. I found out later that it had been a kind of spontaneous office project. A woman in the cubicle next to me brought in the first flowers to try to cheer me up, and then other people just began replenishing my vase. I ended up working there for two years, and many of my best, longest-lasting friendships grew out of that experience.

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I Will Never Forget Her Kindness

I was grocery shopping with my older son who was two or three at the time, and on the autism spectrum, though we didn't know it at the time. He had a speech delay, so couldn't put into words what he wanted. He started to cry because I wouldn't let him get something as we stood in line to check out. And older lady in front of us yelled, "Be quiet!" to my son. I probably should have taken him out, but my items were on the conveyor belt to check out and I needed the items. I checked out finally, put my son in his car seat, shut the door, and stood outside and cried. A lady came over to me and said, "I can't offer any advice, but I can give you a hug," and she hugged me, then went on her way. I will never forget her kindness that day.

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He Toddled Around the Block Till He Reached A Mile for Hurricane Harvey

When five-year-old A.J. Troiano from Bedford, New Hampshire, learned about Hurricane Harvey from his parents and grandparents, who showed him photos of the floods and explained what people in Texas — particularly the children — were going through and everything they had lost, he knew he had to do something about it. So A.J. decided he would walk around his block five times — escorted by his loving grandparents, of course — for a total of two miles to raise money for the American Red Cross to support those affected by the hurricane. He made a poster to showcase his cause and couldn't wait to get started on his walk the next day when he arrived home from kindergarten. As he walked around the block, A.J.'s neighbors, friends, and family came up and asked what he was doing, and he was pleasantly surprised when they started to join in and donate to the cause. He finished the walk sprinting the last lap home, with the total of \$200 he raised. "I hope it is just the beginning for him in understanding on how one person can really make a difference," said A.J.'s grandmother, Kathy Ladd.

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Blanket Statement

When I was seven, my family drove to the Grand Canyon. At one point, my favorite blanket flew out the window and was gone. I was devastated. Soon after, we stopped at a service station. Moping, I found a bench and was about to eat my sandwich when a biker gang pulled into the station. "Is that your blue Ford?" a huge, frightening man with a gray-and-black beard asked. Mom nodded reticently. The man pulled my blanket from his jacket pocket and handed it to her. He then returned to his motorcycle. I repaid him the only way I knew how: I ran up to him and gave him my sandwich.





Seven Miles for Me

Leaving a store, I returned to my car only to find that I'd locked my keys and cell phone inside. A teenager riding his bike saw me kick a tire and say a few choice words. "What's wrong?" he asked. I explained my situation. "But even if I could call my wife," I said, "she can't bring me her car key, since this is our only car." He handed me his cell phone. "Call your wife and tell her I'm coming to get her key." "That's seven miles round trip." "Don't worry about it." An hour later, he returned with the key. I offered him some money, but he refused. "Let's just say I needed the exercise," he said. Then, like a cowboy in the movies, he rode off into the sunset.

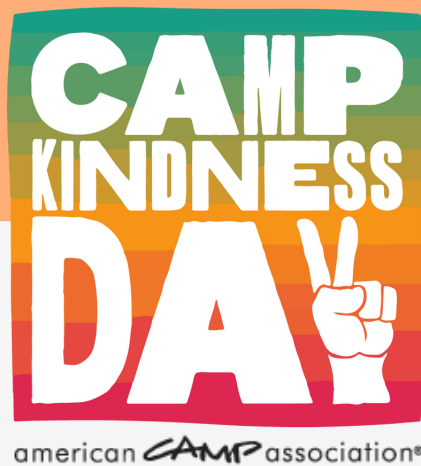
The Answering Machine

Who would ever think that a telephone answering machine could change your life? I had just broken up from a long and very painful relationship and found myself suddenly in a new city without friends, without anything to do or any desire to do anything. I was like a listless blob of expended energy.

Every day I would come home from work and just stare at the walls, sometimes crying but mostly just sitting and wondering if this cloud would ever go away. I had bought an answering machine — why, I don't know, since nobody ever called me. One night I came home and the red light was flashing. I couldn't believe it: a phone call. When I played it back, a wonderful male voice started to apologize he had called the wrong number, and I burst into tears. But then he kept talking. He said my voice on the message had sounded so sad and he just wanted to tell me that it was OK to be sad, that being able to feel that sadness was important. His message went on for almost 20 minutes, just talking about how important it was to be able to go through the pain instead of running away from it, and how even though it probably seemed impossible now, things would get better. He never even said his name, but that message was, in a very important way, the beginning of my life.

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The Secret Gardener

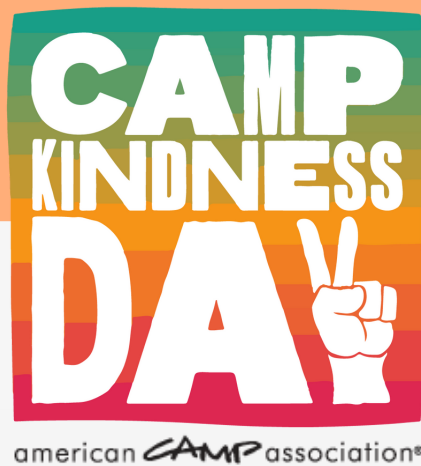
I moved into a new house a few years back. It was the first time I had a yard of any size. There was a small lawn, about 30 rose bushes, six camellias, five rhododendrons, and numerous smaller plants which, at the time, I could not even name. I was a bit overwhelmed and not doing a very good job of maintenance — especially of cutting the grass. After a few weeks, I noticed — vaguely — that something seemed different when I came home one evening. But I didn't pay too much attention. Then one day I came home to find freshly cut grass, precisely trimmed around the edges, all around the sidewalks and driveway. I realized that someone had been weeding and pruning almost every day while I was away at work. Finally, I caught the culprit in the act — my 86-year-old neighbor, Mr. Okumoto. It's now been seven years and he's still doing it, not only my yard but the one behind his house and the one on the other side of his. He's now 93 and I don't know how long I'll be blessed with his diligent work. Maybe forever.

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Lyft Is Giving Free Rides to Cancer Patients Headed to Medical Appointments

One of the largest obstacles faced by those with cancer is getting to and from doctor's appointments — but thanks to Lyft, that will no longer be a problem for hundreds of passengers. In partnership with the American Cancer Society, the ride-sharing service announced that they would be offering free rides to cancer patients who need transportation to a hospital. The Road to Recovery initiative is expanding on Lyft's pilot program, which has already been operating for the last year out of Las Vegas and Miami. The service will soon be available in 10 more American cities, including Atlanta, Cincinnati, Denver, Houston, Philadelphia, and St. Louis.





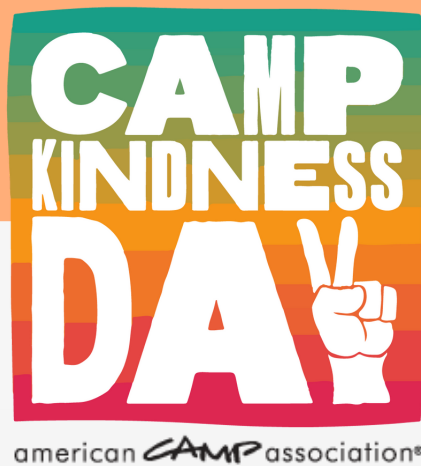
Caring for the Homeless

When Addisyn Goss met her grandfather for the first time two years ago, she learned that he had been homeless for many years. His stories of struggle inspired the now 10-year-old to take action, and she created the “Snuggle Sacks” campaign in areas around Flint, Michigan. “She immediately wanted to do something to help,” said Addisyn’s mom, Stacy Daul. “Homelessness is unfortunately something we see on the way to the grocery store, so it really hit home for the kids.” Addisyn’s sister and brother, Sheridan and Jaxson, also help run the operation. Together they’ve delivered about 1,700 survival kits to people in need. The Snuggle Sacks include toiletries, snacks, and warm coverings for men, women, and children in need. Two years later, Addisyn makes about 100 sacks per month and delivers them personally to individuals living on the streets or to local soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and YMCAs. “When people come up to me and are so excited to get a Snuggle Sack, it makes me happy,” Addisyn said. “They love putting the socks on right away, and I can see they are smiling even though they live a hard life. It gives me hope that I am helping.”

8 Year-old Helping an Elderly Woman up the Stairs

Maurice Adams Jr., age 8, was in car with his mom and sister when they saw the woman who had just crossed a busy road and was attempting to walk up steps. That's when Maurice asked his mom, Contricia, "Can I go out there and help her up the steps?" Hill said. Maurice was seen helping the woman lift her walker up each step. He places one hand on her back to keep her steady. Together, they reach the top of the steps where they embrace as the woman thanks him for his kindness. “Precious little child with a huge compassionate heart!” one user wrote on Facebook. Another user wrote: “He is setting an example to others ... way to go young man.”





He's Helping Track and Protect the Cheetah Population

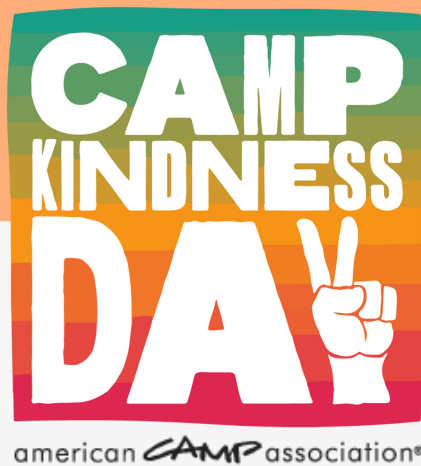
Joris Hutchison, 10-years old, of Seattle, has worked hard all year to save cheetahs from the very real threat of extinction. He has raised more than \$14,000 to purchase GPS collars that track and protect the animals, earning money by selling lemonade, flowers, and T-shirts, and by organizing skating parties and a garage sale. Joris donates all that he raises to N/a'an ku se, a wildlife conservation organization and sanctuary in Namibia where he and his mother have volunteered for the past three summers. As the group's youngest volunteer, Joris prepares food, cleans enclosures, and creates enrichment items for the cheetahs that live there, all of whom have been injured or habituated to humans. The sanctuary protects cheetahs in the wild by convincing farmers not to shoot the animals and instead, to allow the ones accused of killing livestock to be outfitted with GPS collars. "I've learned that everyone can make a difference, even if you're just a kid — you have to start somewhere."

Spare Change

Every day I walk down the mall to get a cup of cappuccino, and every day I get hit up for spare change. Every day. The panhandlers all have these wonderful stories but you never know what to believe. After a while it gets to be an irritation, and then I find myself getting upset that I'm so irritated over what is really just spare change. One day this person came up to me and said, "I just ran out of gas. My car is about six blocks away from here I have two kids in the car and I'm just trying to get back home." I said to myself, "Here we go again," but for some reason I gave him \$10. Then I went on and got my cappuccino. As I was walking back to my office, I again saw the man standing by his car, which had run out of gas right in front of my office. Seeing me, he came over and said, "Thank you, but I don't need the full \$10," and handed me \$2. Now I find that being asked for money no longer bothers me and I give whatever I can every time I get the chance.

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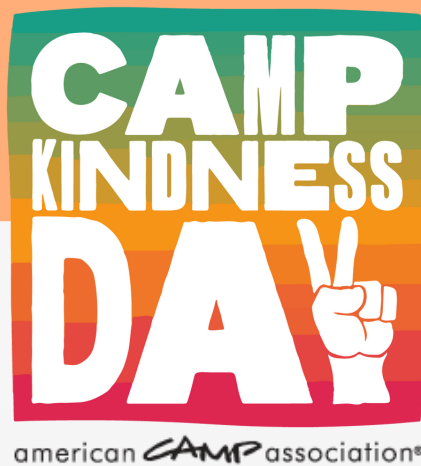


Hundreds of People Bring Backpacks Instead of Flowers to Woman's Funeral

In accordance with one woman's final wish, there were backpacks lining the pews at her funeral instead of flowers. Tammy Waddell passed away earlier this month at the age of 58 from a prolonged illness at Northside Hospital-Forsyth in Georgia, but before she died, she asked for people to bring backpacks filled with school supplies to her funeral. Waddell worked as a paraprofessional and teacher at several schools in the Forsyth County school district. At one point in her 30-year career, she was even recognized as Teacher of the Year. So when she utilized her funeral as a means of giving back to her students one last time, no one was surprised by the compassionate gesture.

"Those around her recognized Tammy by her generosity, selflessness and unconditional love," says her obituary. "Though her achievements and accolades are numerous, none are greater than the many lives that she changed over the course of her three decades in education." Waddell's cousin, Dr. Brad Johnson, posted a photo of the unique funeral feature to Twitter where it garnered praise and condolences. "My cousin, a teacher, wanted backpacks with supplies brought to her funeral instead of flowers for needy students," Brad Johnson said on Twitter. "Serving others to the end." The backpacks will be donated to Project Connect: a school district initiative that donates school supplies to the region's neediest students.



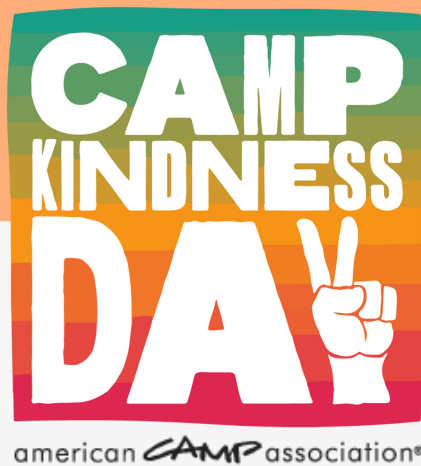


He Rescued a Dazed Woman from Her Car Minutes Before It Exploded

It had been a long day for Donald Carson when he was driving home from work on Sunday. The off-duty correctional officer had just finished a double shift at the Garden State Youth Correctional Facility in South Brunswick, New Jersey when he saw a “dazed” woman who had just gotten into a car collision on the highway. More importantly, she was sitting in her vehicle enough though a fire had started under its hood. “I saw other cars just driving by, so I said, ‘I have to make a decision now,’” Correction Officer Donald Carson told WPIX. “So basically, I just made a U-turn and I approached it and I see her, you know, in shock.” Carson turned his car around and leapt into action. As he approached the car, he found that the 59-year-old woman had rear-ended a tractor-trailer and her wrist was badly broken

Thirty-three-year-old Carson soothed the woman, unbuckled her seatbelt, and scooped her into his arms so he could carry her to a safe distance away from the car. Roughly two minutes later, law enforcement officials arrived on the scene — and the car exploded. The woman is in the hospital, but she is expected to make a full recovery. The local police department is also praising Carson for his courage and initiative. “I would describe his actions as heroic,” South Brunswick Police Chief Raymond J. Hayducka Jr. told the news outlet. “Obviously, someone is alive today because of it.”





The Starfish Story: One Step Toward Changing the World

"Once upon a time, there was an old man who used to go to the ocean to do his writing. He had a habit of walking on the beach every morning before he began his work. Early one morning, he was walking along the shore after a big storm had passed and found the vast beach littered with starfish as far as the eye could see, stretching in both directions. Off in the distance, the old man noticed a small boy approaching. As the boy walked, he paused every so often and as he grew closer, the man could see that he was occasionally bending down to pick up an object and throw it into the sea. The boy came closer still and the man called out, "Good morning! May I ask what it is that you are doing?" The young boy paused, looked up, and replied "Throwing starfish into the ocean. The tide has washed them up onto the beach and they can't return to the sea by themselves," the youth replied. "When the sun gets high, they will die, unless I throw them back into the water." The old man replied, "But there must be tens of thousands of starfish on this beach. I'm afraid you won't really be able to make much of a difference." The boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it as far as he could into the ocean. Then he turned, smiled and said, "It made a difference to that one!"

Adapted from The Star Thrower, by Loren Eiseley (1907 – 1977)





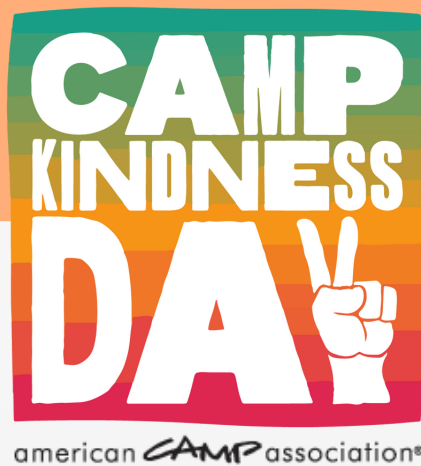
Young People in Action

After **Garrett Lowry** lost his grandfather and his beloved cat to cancer, he knew that he needed to show other cancer patients just how much he cared. Thanks to his grandmother's knitting lessons, the then-11-year-old Garrett turned a class philanthropic project into an ultimate act of compassion. He has knitted more than 150 caps for kids suffering from cancer, donating the caps to hospitals in California and Colorado so the young patients can feel better. His parents are helping him develop a foundation to continue his efforts.

Sunshine Oelfke had been saving up to buy herself a snowmobile, but she decided to break open her piggy bank long before reaching her goal to help her friend buy milk at lunch, something that her friend couldn't afford, even though a carton of milk at their Michigan-based school is only 45 cents. Not satisfied to only give her friend milk for a day, she created a GoFundMe page to cover other children's milk for the full year — at \$6,000.

Jahkil Jackson, age 9, of Chicago, founded "Project I Am" to help the homeless in his hometown. Within the last year, he's compiled and distributed more than 3,000 "Blessings Bags" filled with toiletry items, a towel, socks, and light snacks. He has organized donation drop-off sites and bag-stuffing parties where community members, family, and his fourth-grade friends help him create the bags. He has also established partnerships with homeless shelters and other relief agencies, where he distributes each of his bags and spends time in conversation with the recipients. A frequent public speaker, Jahkil challenges children to find their passion and use it to make a difference. "When I speak to other kids at schools and community centers, I always say, 'Don't wait until you are an adult to be great. You can be great now!'"





Young People in Action

At age 6, while **Ella Tryon** was being treated for Celiac Disease at the hospital, she liked to color, but the hospital could not supply enough crayons. Together, Ella and her parents collected crayon donations from across the United States and last year, Ella delivered 13,132 boxes of crayons and 254 coloring books. She said she wants every kid in the United States to have their own box of crayons if they're in the hospital. Her generous idea has gained attention from benefactors who have donated thousands of boxes of crayons to children's hospitals on her behalf.

Alex McKelvey, age 8, wanted to honor her grandmother, who died at age 60. She completed 60 acts of kindness. She didn't stop there. She recently completed 600 acts.

Third-grade **Caiden** saw a kid in lunch line have to return his lunch since he didn't have enough money. This made him sad. He raised money, collected money, and recycled bottles and to date, has paid for over 230 lunches.

Inspiring Youth Leaders

Kevin Rabinovich was a 14-year-old student who saw the need for dialogue in high school. So, he founded TEDxYouth@Columbia, a by-youth, for-youth organization. Now, they run the Idea Dialogues program, which uses TED Talks to nurture curiosity of ideas, open thinking, and rich dialogue. Idea Dialogues brings together students of diverse backgrounds to have meaningful conversations about important, current ideas, and activates them to create change in their communities. Kevin's impactful and replicable program is currently in 30 South Carolina high schools. Kevin is 20.



Alex Radelich and Dalton Lemert founded Explore Kindness in their dorm room at Purdue. Since 2012, they have driven their RV 35,000 miles across the United States exploring kindness. "With every mile that we travel, every media opportunity we get, and every act of kindness we perform, our aim is to inspire others to Explore Kindness for themselves." Alex and Dalton are 25.

Morgan Guess was bullied when she was in third grade. At a mere age of eight years old, she was experiencing anxiety, stomach spasms, and panic attacks. Her mom said she could choose to "go down with it" or be part of solution. With her mom, Morgan created the Guess Anti-Bullying Foundation, whose mission is to empower young people to life up their voices against bullying and for one another. At age 11, Morgan was selected by the 26-member task force to be their spokesperson to lobby for a bill to finally define bullying in her state. Morgan testified before the legislature and joined now Governor Matt Bevin to sign Senate Bill 228 into law. The definition now protects all 640,000 Kentucky public school students. Morgan has experienced the power of her voice to do good and is a youth in action. Morgan is 14.

Virginia & JoJo Mahoney are co-founders of B Kind Today, which aims to encourage acts of kindness in our everyday lives. The foundation was created in 2013 to carry on her father's legacy of kindness towards others. They have created a B KIND CLUB school program that carries out the mission of the organization. This is done through meetings, social media, events and activities, community projects events. The clubs are structured year around the "Four Elements of Kindness": Kindness to School, Kindness to Community, Kindness to Family and Kindness to Self. Virginia and JoJo both attend Boston College.



Alyssa Antoci wrote *The Purple Marble* when she was just eight-and-a-half. *The Purple Marble* addresses the debilitating effects of bullying and the ways that the cycle of bullying can be addressed and changed. Her self-published book is already in more than 200 schools, libraries, and bookstores and helps school teachers to introduce and shape the difficult conversation around bullying. The book has now been made into a play and has performed in schools nationwide. With her mom, Alyssa co-founded the nonprofit organization, Strength Behind Stars, the mission of which is to "build kinder schools by promoting tolerance, respect and self-esteem by changing the culture so that kindness becomes the new norm." Alyssa travels throughout California speaking about her book and promoting kindness. Alyssa is 15.

