



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 17, 2021

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# The Goodness of America

## Reddit to the Rescue

Five-year-old Jonas Holloway loves manta rays and ocean creatures of all kinds. When he asked his mother, Tiffany, for a stuffed manta ray for his fifth birthday, which was August 16, his struggling mother knew she couldn't afford to buy one, so she used her sewing skills to make him one. She was so proud of how it turned out that she shared the photo of the finished product on Reddit. Her post quickly became the number-one post on the online forum and inspired an outpouring of kindness from the community far and wide.

Tiffany Holloway had posted on Reddit on August 2 to explain her soon-to-be five-year-old wanted a stuffed manta ray for his birthday. Jonas, whose hero is Steve Irwin, loves sea animals, but for his single mother, purchasing a new one simply was not an option.

Holloway told the *Washington Post* she had just \$2 in her savings account, and the cheapest stuffed manta ray she found was \$20.

Holloway and her four boys recently left a domestic-violence situation, and the single mother is doing her best to keep her head above water while caring for her four children. Instead of purchasing a stuffed animal for her son, she used Jonas' old blue baby blanket to make an adorable stuffed manta ray, using buttons for its eyes.

"I sat on the couch until 1 in the morning, poking myself with that needle until I'd finally finished sewing it together," said Holloway. "I took two buttons off one of my blouses and used those for eyes."

Proud of her work, Holloway shared the photo of her homemade manta ray on her August 2 Reddit post.

"I figured I'd be lucky to hear from a couple of people," said Holloway. "I thought I might get teased because the button eyes aren't on straight."

Instead, Reddit readers responded with incredible kindness. More than 60,000 people liked her photo, and her post received tons of positive comments and offers for her family, the *Post* reported. Before long, hundreds of readers were sending stuffed manta rays, squids, and other sea-animal toys.

"He has so many stuffed sea animals there is barely any room for him on his bed but he insists on sleeping with all of them," Tiffany told Good News Network (GNN).

One Redditor, who wished to remain anonymous, went so far as to purchase a \$100 gift card for the family to visit the Blue Zoo so that Jonas could see live sting rays in person.

Another Redditor, Jennifer Prokop, purchased tickets for Tiffany and her four boys to visit the Oklahoma City Zoo, and additional tickets to feed the sting rays, an experience that Jonas greatly enjoyed, according to his mother.

"Jonas got to see and touch and even feed his favorite animal," Tiffany told GNN. "Jennifer and I have become fast friends. She is an amazing kind person with a big heart."

Tiffany said they fed the stingrays for well over an hour.

Prokop also created a GoFundMe page to help Tiffany and her children. The \$2,500 goal set for the



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page was quickly surpassed, and hovered around \$10,000 as of August 23.

Tiffany said the generosity from the Reddit community has made her son happier than he has been in a long time.

"Me and my son are domestic violence survivors, and Jonas is a child that rarely smiles because of all the trauma he's been through," she told GNN. "This outpouring of love and kindness has brought an oh-so-rare smile to his face — and that is worth more to me than anything else."

Holloway said the experience has also been important for her own psyche. Currently unemployed, Holloway has been taking classes at a local community college to become an EMT. She recently emptied her savings account to fly her mother to Oklahoma from Hawaii.

"I've been having a tough time financially and was feeling like a failure as a parent until this happened," she said.

## **"I Am"**

A teacher in Atlanta is helping her students to become confident and see their worth by starting their day with self-affirmations.

In a video that went viral, fourth-grade teacher Neffiteria Acker is shown holding a mirror with the words "I am" attached while students shout positive affirmations to their mirror reflections.

"I am smart!" one student declared.

"I am a good person," said another.

A young boy affirmed, "I am strong and independent."

These are just some of the many wonderful self-affirmations the students declared at the start of their day.

"The idea came from a practice that I do with myself and my 5-year-old daughter," Acker told [Today.com](#). "When we're on our way to school, I have her repeat affirmations to me, starting with, 'I am.' Usually I just ask her to tell me something good about herself. She'll say, 'I'm a fast eater,' or, 'I'm a fast runner.' Then I'll add to it: 'You're also really brave. So why don't you say, 'I'm brave.''"

"It boosts her confidence. It boosts my confidence as a woman and a mother. So I figured, why not add that into the classroom?"

Another teacher, Cierra Levay Broadway, was so moved by what she was witnessing that she decided to video the moment and share it online.

"It was a really great moment," she told Today. "I really got chills when I saw the kids and heard what they were saying for their affirmations. For a lot of them, it was their first time ever doing that."

The two teachers told Today that it was important for the kids to remember what makes them special.

"We teach in a pretty rough neighborhood in Atlanta, and a lot of those kids don't hear that at all," Broadway said. "They hear a lot of negativity about themselves.... It's good to plant those seeds here."

According to the teachers, the students love the affirmation routine and are especially excited about the attention they've gotten since the video was posted to social media.



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