



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 7, 2023

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The Goodness of America

“Merry Christmas Jay”

Twenty-seven-year-old Jay Withey of Kenmore, New York, has been called a hero for rescuing 24 people during the deadly December blizzard in Buffalo that killed 44 people. And as a reward for his heroic efforts, he was gifted Super Bowl tickets by a Buffalo Bills legend.

The December blizzard blanketed Buffalo with 52 inches of snow, trapping people in their vehicles and rendering rescue vehicles unable to reach them. Withey was stranded east of Buffalo during the storm, and on December 24, after spending a night in his vehicle with two strangers, began running low on fuel.

In an effort to find shelter from the blizzard for the three of them, he broke a window at a nearby school and went inside. Once he secured shelter, he went back out into the blizzard in search of others who needed help. He found seven elderly people and multiple families with children and pets who were stranded in their vehicles. He helped bring them to the school.

“I thought we were going to die,” said one of the trapped drivers, Sabrina Andino, according to ABC News. “It was scary and unforgettable. But seeing Jay ... and getting us in the school really saved us.”

Fox News reported Jay brought back a total of 24 people.

“My mission was just to keep going out and grabbing as many people as I can and to just keep going,” Withey told NBC News. “I just kept walking, and I walked until I cried and I couldn’t walk any further. I was just beat.”

Inside, Withey pried open the kitchen door and found food for everyone. He grabbed blankets and water from the nurse’s office. He also left the front door open overnight in case anyone seeking shelter stumbled upon the school.

After 24 hours, Withey found a snowblower and used it to help dig everyone out, NBC News reported.

Though Withey felt bad about destroying school property, he knew it was a life-or-death situation. He left an apology note at the school explaining why he broke in.

“To whom it may concern,” Withey wrote in the letter, “I’m terribly sorry about breaking the school window and for breaking in the kitchen. Got stuck at 8 p.m. Friday and slept in my truck with two strangers just trying not to die. There were seven elderly people also stuck and out of fuel. I had to do it to save everyone and get them shelter and food and a bathroom. Merry Christmas.”

He signed the letter only “Jay,” earning him the moniker “Merry Christmas Jay.”

The Cheektowaga Police Department (CPD) was alerted to the broken window when a keyholder for the school saw the broken glass. An officer saw the note and reviewed security footage and found that the people who sought shelter in the building only used what they needed. They pulled smart boards from classrooms to watch for updates on the storm, only ate what they needed to survive, and allowed their children to use the gym to play. Everything they used was put back exactly where they found it.

“When they were finally able to leave safely, you never would have known anyone was there,” the CPD said.



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"This group of amazing people took care of each other and the building they found shelter in," the department added.

Jay's letter was shared by the CPD on social media along with screenshots taken from security-camera footage in an effort to find the man who risked his life to save others. The post assured viewers that there was no intention of pressing charges against him for destruction of property, but that the department wanted to identify "Jay" and recognize him for his "above and beyond" actions. When Jay was identified, the CPD extended their gratitude for what he did on that fateful night.

"I feel 100% that Jay's actions were heroic and 100% saved lives," Cheektowaga Police Chief Brian Gould told ABC News.

Withey told the CPD that the people with whom he sheltered at the school for the night have become like family and were planning a summer gathering together.

"I just couldn't ask for more better people to get stuck with," Withey told NBC News.

As if this story was not already perfect enough, on January 20, a video was posted to the Buffalo Bills Twitter page that captured former Buffalo Bills running back Thurman Thomas and his wife, Patti, surprising Withey with two tickets to Super Bowl LVII, set to take place on February 12, People.com reported.

"We love you. We know what you did on Christmas Eve was very heroic and you are our hero, and the Bills and Highmark want to present you with these tickets to go watch the Super Bowl," Thomas told Withey while presenting him with the tickets.

Withey said he has been overwhelmed and shocked by the show of support he has received from complete strangers for what he did. He said he has even received thank-you letters from people as far away as Australia.

Hody Childress Fund

For more than a decade in the town of Geraldine, Alabama, a secret benefactor had been anonymously paying for the prescriptions of area residents who couldn't afford them. That man has only recently been revealed to be Hody Childress, 80, a farmer and retired U.S. Air Force veteran, who sadly passed away on January 1.

More than 10 years ago, Childress went into his local pharmacy and gave the owner, Brooke Walker, a \$100 bill to put toward pharmacy bills of people who could not afford medications, *The Washington Post* reported. Childress instructed Walker not to tell the customers where the money came from. Instead, he told her to tell them "it's a blessing from the Lord."

Childress made a habit of delivering a \$100 bill to the Geraldine pharmacist on the first of each month, and after 10 years, he had secretly paid for more than 900 prescriptions. His own family did not even know of his generosity until recent health issues forced Childress to ask his daughter, Tania, to make the trip to the pharmacy with his \$100 bill.

"I was shocked," Tania told the *Post*. "I had no idea that he was helping people at the drug store."

Childress' passing has prompted the community to honor his legacy and pool together money to continue the tradition by setting up the Hody Childress Fund.



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