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The Goodness of America

Goal, Schmoal!

Eight-year-old Kayzen Hunter helped change the life of his favorite waiter, Devonte Gardner, in this sweet story out of Little Rock, Arkansas.

Hunter's favorite place to dine for breakfast is his local Waffle House, where he met and befriended Gardner more than a year ago. Eating at the Waffle House became a family tradition after Hunter started going with his grandfather, and the family had breakfast there nearly every weekend.

"When [Kayzen] came home, he talked about Devonte and how much he liked him," Kayzen's mom, Vittoria Hunter, told TODAY.com.

Gardner enjoys Kayzen's company as much as Kayzen enjoys his.

"Every time he comes in, I always give him a high five because that's what he expects," Gardner told TODAY.com.

"He's a wonderful kid," he added. "He tells me jokes every time he comes in."

Kayzen and his family got to know Gardner well over the last year and learned that his living situation was not great. Gardner had been living in a motel with his wife, Aissa, and two daughters, Jade, three, and Amoura, two, for the last eight months after the family left low-income housing.

"We just got tired of infestations with rats and roaches and all this black mold. My daughters were getting sick," Gardner explained. "No heat and things like that. When it was cold outside, we had to bundle up with like four or five blankets in order to stay warm."

What's more, Gardner had no transportation to get to and from work and either walked or got rides. He told Kayzen's family he had been trying to save for a car but was set back by the motel expenses.

Kayzen wanted to do something to help Gardner improve his situation, so he came home and asked his mother to help him set up a GoFundMe page.

Kayzen and his family set a goal of \$5,000 to help Gardner purchase a family vehicle.

"Hi, my name is Kayzen, I am 8 years old," starts the GoFundMe description.

"Devonte is a hard-working dad with two little girls and a wife. He is a dedicated worker and has to walk or get a ride to get to work every day," the page reads. "He was looking for a decent priced car, and his family was unfortunate and ended up in an apartment riddled with black mold. He had to get his kids out and it set him back a lot. We are now helping him get into a clean rental property and want to help him even more by raising funds so he has a reliable vehicle to drive his family and get to and from work."

Gardner's story touched a lot of hearts, and has shockingly surpassed \$100,000, despite the modest goal.

For Gardner, the campaign has been life-changing. Because of the fundraiser, he was able to sign a lease on a two-bedroom apartment with a goal of eventually purchasing a home. He said he also plans to purchase a minivan for a family vehicle, and will save the rest of the money for his daughters.



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“I want to put my daughters in a good school, I want them to be in a good environment,” Gardner said. “Everything I’m getting is going mostly towards my daughters to make sure they have a great, great life. Make sure we won’t have to struggle anymore.”

Surprise!

Delayne Ivanowski, 25, proved the strength of a daughter’s love for her father when she secretly donated a kidney to her ailing father in spite of his repeated objections.

Ivanowski told ABC News that the donation was the culmination of a nine-month plan that she plotted after her father, John, repeatedly refused to accept her offer to donate her kidney. John, who suffered from kidney disease and spent four days a week on dialysis, lost a son to cancer 16 years ago and was terrified of losing his daughter. He preferred to risk years of dialysis waiting for a kidney over taking a kidney from his only remaining child.

“I thought, I lost my boy and if anything happened to Delayne, I don’t know what I would do,” he said, according to WJNT. “It was a big concern.”

But Ivanowski knew that her father’s quality of life diminished dramatically because of the dialysis, and she desperately wanted to help, so she had to get creative.

“I was like, ‘I’m going to do it. I don’t care how mad he is at me. I don’t care if he kicks me out of the house or hates me or doesn’t say a word to me for the rest of my life,’” she told ABC News. “At least he’ll be living a good life and not hooked up to a machine.”

Some months later, Ivanowski got approval to be her dad’s donor. This included countless medical tests and blood work at the same clinic as her dad, all without him knowing.

When John got word that an anonymous donor was a kidney match, he was shocked.

“I about dropped the phone,” he recalled to ABC News. “People can be on the [kidney waiting] list for five, six, seven, eight years and go through dialysis for that long, and I just couldn’t believe it.”

According to Dr. Jason Wellen, there are more than 100,000 people waiting for a kidney transplant in the country currently.

“The one way we can get people transplanted within a few months is if they come to us with a living donor,” Wellen told ABC News.

To help keep the donation a secret, hospital staff had to take special precautions to ensure John did not see his daughter during preop on the day of the February 16 transplant.

After John’s successful procedure, he was in for the shock of his life when his daughter walked into his hospital room in a hospital gown following the surgery. Video footage captured the tearful moment in which John realized that his daughter was the anonymous donor.

Both John and Delayne are recovering well, and John is already feeling the effects of having a working kidney again. Delayne is hopeful that her story inspires others to consider becoming living donors.

“If anything, I’ve saved one life and hopefully I can, with awareness and other things, save other lives by encouraging people to become donors or to take that next step and go get the testing done to become a match,” she told WJNT.



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