



The Goodness of America

The celebration of a New Year is always a bittersweet experience. While we optimistically welcome with great hope the beginning of a new year, we must also bid farewell to the previous one and remember all the events that made it special. In the year 2010, there is so much worthy of remembrance, as proof of the American spirit — charity, heroics, kindness — was widely evident. As we apprehensively embark on the year 2011, fearful of the future of our great nation, it is best to recall those American moments so that we may maintain hope that the American people still have what it takes to preserve all that makes our country so exceptional.

- In January, for example, a Eugene, Oregon, man named Ben Bond fed money into expired parking meters for strangers as a meter maid began writing parking tickets. When the maid discovered what Bond was doing, he was arrested and later fined \$810. Recounting the events with KEZI 9 News, Bond described his motivations on that fateful day: “Had a pocket full of change and decided nobody else needs to get a ticket on this street.” For those who were spared an expensive parking ticket, the seemingly small task was a rather grand gesture.
- David Benke of Littleton, Colorado, became a national hero on February 23, 2010. A math teacher at Deer Creek Middle School, Benke discovered a gunman taking shots at students with a hunting rifle as frightened teenagers ran for their lives. Benke, 57, immediately took action, tackling the 32-year-old gunman, Bruco Strongeagle Eastwood, and pinning him to the ground, saving the lives of countless students. Days later, a Facebook page was created, entitled “Dr. David Benke is a Hero!” The page acquired 25,000 messages, all of which honored Benke for the hero he truly is.
- On March 23, 2010, *Blame It on the Voices* wrote about James Harrison, 74, who is responsible for saving the lives of millions of children. Harrison’s plasma possesses a particular antibody that treats Rhesus disease, which results from a pregnant mother’s immune system generating antibodies that attack her unborn baby’s blood cells. To prevent severe disease and death of children in their mothers’ wombs, Harrison has donated blood every few weeks since the age of 18, totaling 984 donations thus far. It is estimated he has helped 2.2 million babies. According to Harrison, “I’ve never thought about stopping. Never.”
- In April, Tony Gin was honored in *Garment and Citizen* for his inspirational lectures. A once-homeless drug addict who spent 10 years in prison, Gin managed to turn his life around. He now serves as a motivational voice in Los Angeles for others who find themselves in similar predicaments.
- Two quick-thinking street vendors, Lance Orton and Duane Jackson, helped to foil the terrorist plots of a New York City madman in May when they noticed a suspicious looking vehicle parked in the heart of Times Square — engine running, hazard lights flashing, and no driver to be found. Accustomed to alerting police to pickpockets and hustlers, the two men immediately went to the authorities to alert them to the unusual vehicle. Upon inspection, police discovered that within the vehicle was a bomb prepared for detonation. Orton and Jackson, along with heroic law-enforcement efforts, saved the lives of thousands of New Yorkers.
- In June, a Gainesville, Florida, man tragically perished while trying to save four children from drowning. Douglas Butler, 47, noticed the children were in trouble as they were swept away in the water and immediately came to their aid. While saving the last child, Butler went under water to hold



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the boy above his head until a rescuer arrived on a raft. Butler's last words reportedly were, "Don't worry. I've got you. I'm not going to let you drown. I've got you." Friends of Butler said he was a never-ending good Samaritan. "He helped anybody. He would give people the shirt off his back. He was just a great guy."

- An armed good Samaritan in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, intervened in a robbery perpetrated against a gas station clerk on July 16. According to police Superintendent Michael Chitwood, the robber entered the gas station, demanding money. The clerk attempted to run for help, but was captured by the robber and beaten mercilessly. While driving by, the good Samaritan observed the scene and stopped to get involved. He pulled out his gun, causing the robber to run off, only to be captured later.
- In August, a Long Island family became the recipient of some charity. Upon learning that the family was victimized by a con man who was hired to install a sprinkler system, Richard Gasparino, a licensed contractor who owns Evermist Lawn Sprinklers, installed a new sprinkler system for the family, pro bono.
- In September, the *New Southwest* reported on the rescue efforts of Terri Goddard and Signe Razzi, owners of a grass-roots rescue group called Cold Wet Noses that temporarily houses unwanted animals until they are adopted into good homes. In addition to a loving foster home, the women provide complete care for the animals. The website notes that the weak economy has resulted in overcrowded and underfunded animal rescue organizations. Grass-roots groups like Cold Wet Noses have helped to manage the influx of homeless animals.
- When Evan Burfield, a Washington, D.C., resident, left his sport coat and wallet on the Red Line train in October, he never dreamed he would see either item again. Upon returning from work that evening, however, Evan found his coat and wallet (complete with cash and credit cards) resting on his sofa. He learned that a good Samaritan found the coat and wallet, and returned the objects to his home — a very pleasant surprise, indeed!
- In December, Leila Warren was honored for her creation of the Humane Solution, the first low-cost spay/neuter program in her area of Winston Salem, N.C. Warren explained the inspiration for her program. "We're making steps in ending euthanasia as a means of population control. I focus on what I can do for the animals now." Warren's efforts assert that every creature of God deserves love.

So, as we close the door on 2010, let us not forget the moments worth remembering, and allow them to serve as constant reminders of the goodness of America. Above all, let each moment inspire the goodness of America within ourselves in 2011 and beyond.



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