



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 4, 2016

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The Goodness of America

Plus One

A big brother in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, saw to it that one item on his dying sister's bucket list could be crossed off.

Ten-year-old Rebekah Spader was diagnosed with MDS — pre-leukemia — several years ago and has since undergone a failed bone marrow transplant. KSFY reports that the family decided to forgo any further treatment and instead is working to help Rebekah live the rest of her life to the fullest.

Rebekah, like most little girls, has always wanted to experience dressing up and feeling like a princess. When Rebekah's brother AJ learned that his high school was hosting a Valentine's Day dance, he decided to invite his sister to be his date and give her an unforgettable night where she could dress up and feel beautiful. "I wanted to ask my sister because she's most likely not going to be able to experience high school. So I just thought why not ask her to formal," AJ Spader said.

The evening began with a formal dinner with AJ's friends and their dates.

According to AJ, Rebekah stole the show. She stood out among all the other dates. "Rebekah kind of trumped them all," AJ Spader said. "Her laugh is pretty great. It's really fun to just be around her and just make memories.... I want to spend as much time with her as possible while she's still doing good."

Rebekah had a great time with AJ and his friends. After dinner, she was not feeling up to going to the dance, KSFY reports, but she still had a memorable evening. And AJ's parents could not be prouder of their son. "He's thinking about his sister and she's not going to get to go to the prom or the formal when she's in high school because she's probably not going to make it to high school, so he just wanted to give her that memory," Tony Spader said.

Sign With Love

Fifth graders in Peoria, Illinois, chose to give up their recess one day a week so that they can learn sign language to help them better communicate with a deaf classmate named Rhemy Elsey.

According to WMBD, Elsey relies on sign language and an interpreter to communicate. He also has cochlear implants to help him hear somewhat.

Elsey's interpreter, Tammy Arvin, told ABC News that students were unable to communicate directly with Rhemy, and that Rhemy's use of an interpreter made it difficult for him to socialize with his classmates. "It can be really hard for [deaf kids] from a social and emotional standpoint to have an interpreter following them around all day long. It can feel somewhat isolating," Arvin told ABC News.

That is why Arvin was particularly moved when Rhemy's classmates expressed an interest in forming an American Sign Language club to learn sign language so that they can communicate with their classmate. "I was thrilled that they were interested and that they wanted to learn some sign language and that they were taking some initiative to be able to communicate more effectively with one of their classmates," she told WMBD.

And Rhemy was honored by his classmates' show of support. "It's like they want to be like me," he told WMBD.



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Arvin told ABC News that the sign language classes have already improved the way the students and Rhemy communicate.

Arvin contends that the students' involvement in the sign language club has given them insight into another culture. "They don't necessarily realize they're learning ... about deaf culture by participating in this club," Arvin told ABC News. "It really gives them a perspective on this other culture within the U.S. that they previously weren't aware [of], so they're benefiting ginormously just in terms of learning about diversity and having a broader perspective on the world around them."

A Hero's Generosity

Firefighter Ryan McCuen of Detroit, Michigan, responded to an emergency call where he went above and beyond the call of duty, ABC News reported.

McCuen responded to an emergency call after the power went out in a home where a teenage boy's life is maintained by an electric ventilator. When McCuen arrived, he learned that the family was more than \$1,000 behind on their electric bill payments, even after making monthly payments ranging from \$200 to \$300.

Christy Stone, 49, told ABC News that she called 911 immediately when the power went out because her son, Troy Stone, has Duchenne muscular dystrophy and would not be able to live long without a ventilator. Another son, a 15-year-old, also has muscular dystrophy, though he does not require a ventilator. Stone states that the family has been buried in medical bills.

Extended family attempted to help the family raise money by creating a GoFundMe page, but the page failed to receive enough donations to cover the significant bills.

After learning all of this, McCuen decided to pay the electric bill in its entirety, a total of \$1,023. "When she explained the unpaid bill, her family's situation and how she didn't know what to do, it was a no-brainer for me," he told ABC News.

When the Clinton Township Fire Department chief learned of McCuen's good deed, he shared the story. Those who heard it were inspired to act.

"Someone donated a generator and said he would come out today to help us hook it up," Stone said. "Our GoFundMe to help raise money for a lift van for my sons to fit their wheelchairs has been getting a lot of support now."

The family was so overwhelmed by the goodness of all those who have helped them, McCuen in particular. Stone and a friend told ABC News that they hand-delivered a balloon, a thank-you card, and cookies to McCuen at the department.

For McCuen, there really seemed no other option but to help the struggling family. "You could tell they were honest folks — and it just seemed right," he told WDIV News.

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