



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 23, 2016

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The Goodness of America

Happy Birthday, Toxey!

Arkansas State troopers helped salvage a 10-year-old's birthday after none of the boy's classmates showed up to his birthday party. The troopers arrived with presents and cake and kept the little boy entertained for hours.

Toxey Andrews of Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, was turning 10 years old and invited his entire class of 21 students to his birthday party. But on April 2, the day of his party, no one showed up, compelling his mother, Angela Andrews, to post on Facebook, pleading with parents not to ignore birthday party invitations.

"On Saturday night, I knew no one was coming, and I posted on Facebook just kind of like an outcry to parents. Just please if your kids get invited to birthdays take them," Andrews said.

Andrews said that she was "heartbroken" for her son. "It's the last thing you want to feel for your kid, that no one cared enough to come," she said.

One particular Facebook user saw the post and mentioned to the state troopers what had happened, and two days later, they surprised Toxey at his home.

THV11 reported that a line of troopers stood on Toxey's doorstep ready to party. They brought a birthday cake and several gifts, and stayed to play a game of basketball and show Toxey their patrol vehicles.

"They showed me all the keys to do the sirens and the horn. I also got to see the cage with the dog in it," Toxey said.

The gifts ranged from a Razor scooter to video games.

"They had come to give me all that stuff and make up their own birthday party for me," said Toxey.

Toxey was so touched by the troopers' actions that he said he hopes to be an Arkansas State trooper one day.

Sports Accessible to All

A couple in Richmond, Virginia, wanted to keep at-risk children out of trouble by starting a baseball program, and the nonprofit group Leveling the Playing Field made it all possible.

Kelvin Giles and his wife, Tondrea, recognized the impact that sports could have on at-risk children and decided to start a baseball program in their community. Unfortunately, they realized, the children did not have any of the equipment necessary to play baseball, such as bats, gloves, or baseballs. The couple did not have the financial means to take the kids to a store to purchase the equipment, so they rented a vehicle to drive two hours to a warehouse in Silver Spring, Maryland, that collects used equipment.

The warehouse is owned by Leveling the Playing Field, a nonprofit organization that collects pre-owned equipment and houses it for those who require sports equipment but cannot afford to buy it.

The Washington Post reported that Leveling the Playing Field was launched in 2013 by Max Levitt of Bethesda, Maryland.



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Levitt states that he was inspired to start the nonprofit because of his experience as an equipment manager for his football team at Syracuse University. Levitt explains that each season, managers were asked to get rid of the “old” equipment, which was used but still mostly in good condition.

“We threw it all in the dumpster,” Levitt said. “It was crazy.”

When Levitt began working for the Montgomery County recreation department, he also observed that people would often discard sports equipment that was still in good condition.

He decided to do something about it.

Levitt first began collecting equipment at his parents’ home, and word quickly spread. The retail company Under Armour learned of his efforts and sent a truck to haul the equipment, which amounted to seven pallets, when he needed to move his growing operation to a warehouse.

With corporate donors and relationships with major companies such as Under Armour, Morgan Stanley, and Whole Foods, the nonprofit has donated over \$1.4 million worth of equipment to 250 programs in the region, wrote the *Washington Post*.

Leveling the Playing Field allowed the Gileses to move forward with their baseball program. Last month, the organization donated uniforms, bats, gloves, balls, and jump ropes to the baseball program.

Kelvin recalled how he felt when he walked into the warehouse and saw just how much equipment it held: “In my mind I’m saying, ‘God, you are faithful.’”

Farm Program

Mark and Jill Baker have been running Bakers Green Acres farm in Marion, Michigan, since Mark left the Air Force in 2004. The Bakers have always made a point of employing military veterans on their farm, but at the start of 2016, they decided to establish a formal program for returning veterans that would teach them farming techniques.

Mark believes that his program can help returning veterans have a new lease on life and help make their transition from military to civilian life easier. “It is the duty of non-commissioned officers like me to help the young people who have a hard time returning from war,” Mark explained. “A lot of them have injuries that will prevent them from being in the workforce, or have difficulties transitioning from the harsh realities of war to civilian life. This is just one way I can help.”

For the program, the Bakers have opened a dormitory on their property to house the farmers-in-training. Additionally, they extended the program’s services to include providing consultations for veterans elsewhere who are interested in opening their own farms. In many cases, the consultation also includes donating equipment and livestock to the aspiring farmers.

The Bakers are funding this program themselves, through the income they receive from the farm and through Mark’s military pension, but have also received equipment from generous donors. In an effort to expand the program and assist more veterans, the Bakers are asking for additional donations and have placed a link on their website where interested donors can offer financial contributions.

But Mark told *The New American* that even without financial donations, the farm will continue the program. “We have to look out for each other,” Baker said.

— Raven Clabough



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