



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 22, 2016

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The Goodness of America

Pools for Kids

When San Antonio resident Todd Arredondo noticed children being teased after a Facebook photo showed them enjoying a makeshift swimming pool in the bed of a pickup truck, he decided he would do something. He started a campaign called “Pools for Kids,” wherein people can donate funds to struggling families to help them install a pool for their children.

MySA reported on June 29 that the Facebook photo, which has since been deleted, featured several children playing in a “pool” that they created in the bed of a pickup truck to try and keep cool on a hot summer day. It reportedly provoked other users to mock not only the children, but the neighborhood in which they live.

“[Commenters] were poking and making fun of the family,” Arredondo told MySA. “Everyone was laughing and putting down the West Side.”

The family in the photo was simply “making good with what they had,” he said.

Arredondo used Facebook to locate the family and surprised them by purchasing an inflatable swimming pool, which he hand-delivered to the home.

Arredondo stated that the experience of delivering the pool and seeing the family so happy inspired him to go beyond his already good deed and start a campaign wherein he could do the same for other families. He started a GoFundMe campaign, which raised over \$2,000 in its first two weeks, and intends to use the money to purchase inflatable pools for other families. MySA.com reported that he will be using his own money to provide families with the equipment needed for pool upkeep.

Arredondo’s charitable endeavor has become a large one. According to MySA, he even decided to take off several weeks of work to manage and execute the campaign. “I had to take a step away and humble myself,” he added. “I’ve met some amazing families and heard heartbreaking stories. But at the end of the day, if you can put a smile on a kid’s face — it’s priceless.”

Arredondo has used Facebook to locate 50 San Antonio families who would benefit from the pools.

Celebrating 100 Years

When Jeanette Carty, a widow in Norfolk, Virginia, turned 100, the local fire department ensured that she celebrated in style. Carty boasts a long line of family members who served in the Norfolk Fire-Rescue Department, and the firefighters wanted to use her 100th birthday to honor that.

Today.com reported that Carty’s husband, Joe, with whom she shared 72 years of marriage, served with the fire department for 30 years. Her nephew and her brother also served with the department.

To pay homage to Carty and her family, a large group of firefighters surprised her at her house on June 22, when she turned 100. They lined up in front of her house, dressed in red shirts and black pants, and presented her with flowers to kick off her birthday party.

“I was never more surprised in my life,” Carty told Today.com. “To see the firemen all lined up with their red shirts and black pants, oh my goodness it was amazing.”

According to Today.com, one of the firefighters in the city’s training department had learned Carty was



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about to reach her milestone birthday and encouraged the department to surprise her. For the firefighters, the surprise served as a simple way to let Carty know she is still part of their family. Norfolk Battalion Chief Julian Williamson told Today.com, "It's that way with fire departments. Once you're in and you serve, you're part of a close-knit family."

Jail for a Day

When Judge Lou Olivera of Cumberland County, North Carolina, sentenced a veteran to jail for one day, after the man admitted he tampered with his urine screen and had been driving under the influence, Olivera did something quite unusual. He decided to stay the night with the veteran in jail and talk him through some of his issues.

The *Washington Post* reported that the offender, Sergeant Joseph Serna, was a former Special Forces soldier in the U.S. Army who had served for nearly 20 years. Since retiring from the military, he has been struggling with PTSD and has turned to alcohol to help him cope.

When Serna appeared before Olivera and admitted to tampering with his urine screen, Judge Olivera sentenced him to one day in jail, offering to drive him there personally, which was unusual enough.

But it was during that drive to jail on April 13 that Olivera decided to go one step further. Olivera told the *Fayetteville Observer*, "When Joe first came to turn himself in, he was trembling. I decided that I'd spend the night serving with him."

According to the *Washington Post*, Judge Olivera, a veteran himself, spent the night in the cell with Serna talking to him and exchanging war stories.

Serna recalls the moment when Judge Olivera entered the cell. "I knew this was a very compassionate man," Serna says. "I know how involved he is with veterans, and he's a veteran himself. I got chills when he walked in."

The details of the conversation are private, but Serna told WRAL that it was "more of a father-son conversation."

Since the cell had just one bed, Judge Olivera gave it to Serna and slept on two mats on the floor, said Serna. Olivera's kindness did not end there. Serna's wife, Rocio Serna — also a veteran — said that when Judge Olivera brought Serna home after their night in the cell, he brought donuts for the family.

Judge Olivera is reportedly uncomfortable with the attention he has received from the story, asserting that any fellow veteran would have done the same. "I thought about a story that I once read," Olivera told the *Fayetteville Observer*. "It talked about a soldier with PTSD in a hole," he says. "A family member, a therapist and a friend all throw down a rope to help the veteran suffering. Finally, a fellow veteran climbs into the hole with him. The soldier suffering with PTSD asks, 'Why are you down here?' The fellow veteran replied, 'I am here to climb out with you.'"

"After serving in the Gulf War and seeing many suffer from injuries in service," the judge said, "I thought about that story when Joe walked in shaking. I do know that many veterans would have done the same. They would have gotten in the hole to help. And so did I."

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