

Written by <u>Raven Clabough</u> on November 7, 2016 Published in the November 7, 2016 issue of <u>the New American</u> magazine. Vol. 32, No. 21



# **Goodness of America**

# **Bachelorette Party for All**

In lieu of a traditional bachelorette party, a bride-to-be from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, decided instead to take ladies from a local women's shelter out for a day of pampering and fun.

Jessika Baldwin, 31, and her bridal party planned a day of indulgence involving salons and restaurants, and invited women from a local shelter to join them.

"When your closest friends and family get together for your bachelorette party, that makes for a powerful team!" she said. "I wouldn't want to waste that time and energy, so to use it making others feel good (even if it's just for one day) makes for a better memory than taking shots, stumbling around and bar hopping."

The women began the day on August 6 at a local Starbucks before going to a salon for three hours of hair and nail treatments. They then went to lunch, engaged in a shopping extravaganza, and ended the evening with dinner, all of which was paid in full. According to the Huffington Post, several of the businesses had donated their services for the occasion.

Baldwin explained that she was motivated to do this for these strangers because of her own struggles in the past. "I was in a tough place in my life before, and I remember wishing for someone to just pick me up, take me out and just make me feel good," she told Revelist. "I really wanted to lift the spirits of some women who are in difficult situations and treat them for a day."

# **Unexpected Lunch Date**

Montford Middle School student Bo Paske of Tallahassee, Florida, has autism, and he struggles to fit in with his classmates. Paske spends most of his lunchtimes sitting alone in the cafeteria, something that was a concern for his mother, but a local celebrity did something that made Paske feel special. For that, he and his family are grateful.

Travis Rudolph, a wide receiver for Florida State University's football team, was visiting Montford Middle School on August 30 when he spotted Bo sitting alone, according to CBS News. Rudolph brought his lunch to Paske's table and sat with him to eat. A security officer at the middle school snapped a photo of Rudolph and Paske eating together, and it went viral, prompting a letter of thanks by Paske's mother, Leah, who also posted her gratitude for the small, but sweet gesture.

"I do remember middle school being scary, and hard," said Leah in a Facebook post. "Now that I have a child starting middle school, I have feelings of anxiety for him, and they can be overwhelming if I let them."

"This is one day I didn't have to worry if my sweet boy ate lunch alone, because he sat across from someone who is a hero in many eyes. Travis Rudolph thank you so much, you made this momma exceedingly happy, and have made us fans for life!"

Rudolph did not expect his actions to become a viral news story, but was glad when it did, as he feels it sets a very good example. "I didn't even recognize that it would be this big. It just became really viral, and I just wanted it to become aware that everyone is the same, and one man can make a difference."

# New American

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Rudolph's small gesture was already a very pleasant surprise for the Paskes, but Rudolph decided to take it a step further.

Time.com reported that on Labor Day, Rudolph surprised Paske with a personalized Seminoles football jersey with Rudolph's number 15 and Paske's name. He also gave the Paskes tickets to attend the Labor Day season opener — a great game that the Seminoles won 45-34, with Rudolph scoring a touchdown.

### PurpMe

A video posted on Labor Day featuring an incredibly kind act by a high-school student went viral and is serving as a wonderful example for local youth. Fourteen-year-old LaRon Tunstill (also known as Ron Ron) of Louisville, Kentucky, was captured on video removing his brand new Nike sneakers and handing them to a shoeless homeless man, WDRB reports.

The story is incredibly inspirational as the neighborhood in which Tunstill resides is a dangerous one, with frequent shootings and notorious gang activity. Tunstill is doing his best to stay out of trouble and joined a group called "PurpMe," a non-profit organization "dedicated to reforming the idea of a PURPose through encouragement," the group's mission states. PURP stands for "People Uplifting Real People."

Tunstill's actions certainly embodied the group's message. He was out that day with PurpMe distributing food to the homeless in the community when he observed the man without shoes. After Tunstill gave the man the shoes off his own feet, he sat and talked with him and listened to the man's story. It was one to which Tunstill related, as he too had struggled in his life before he decided to make a constructive change and be a positive influence.

PurpMe's founder, Jason Reynolds, captured Tunstill's good deed on his phone and posted it on Facebook in the hopes that it would inspire the youth on the west side of Louisville to choose charity and goodness over the other negative influences in the area.

"You got 14-year-old kids out here shooting and killing people, and Ron Ron decides he's going to give his own shoes," Reynolds said.

According to Reynolds, Tunstill serves as a mentor in the group for young people. Reynolds told ABC News that Tunstill went through a "bad phase" about three years ago, during which time he was doing a lot of fighting and being disrespectful. Reynolds reached out to Tunstill as a mentor, and since then, Tunstill has transformed. Reynolds attributes his change of heart to "God's grace."

PurpMe is hopeful that it can expand across west Louisville and has started a "GoFundMe" page in an effort to raise money for a van so that the group can transport volunteers throughout the area.

"I started these PurpMe teams to replace the gangs and violence in our streets with community outreaches and love in our streets," Reynolds said. "We may not have much ourselves, but we do the best with what we got. We just want to start a movement of people loving and uplifting one another."

— Raven Clabough



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