



Goodness of America

Teachers Making a Difference

For many educators, teaching is more than just a career. It is a calling that allows them to have a special impact on the lives of impressionable young people. The following are prime examples of those educators.

- Special education teacher Kinsey French found a way to make her students feel special by including them in a major life event: her wedding.

French works at Christian Academy's Rock Creek Campus in Louisville, Kentucky, and loves her students, all of whom have Down syndrome, as if they were her family. For that reason, she wanted them to be involved in the most important day of her life. "They were like family to me. They were my first class and they've been my only class and so I knew I couldn't have a special day without them," French said.

The students loved participating in French's wedding, which took place in September, and told WLKY News that dancing was their favorite part of the day.

- Preschool teacher Beth Battista of Madison, Wisconsin, gave one of her students the greatest gift of all: the gift of life.

Battista's student Lyla Carreyn was diagnosed with a rare autoimmune disorder last year, which requires her to be on dialysis for 12 hours per day.

Carreyn needed a kidney, and Battista decided to get tested to find out if she was a match. After learning that she was, Battista, a mother of two, discussed with her husband the possibility of donating her kidney to Carreyn. Her husband reportedly gave her his blessing, and Battista met with Carreyn's mother, Dena, in September to deliver the wonderful news.

For Dena, it's a conversation she will never forget. "Looking back on it now, the whole thing is surreal," Carreyn told Today.com. "It took a minute to sink in, and once it did, I was just so overwhelmed. I felt very similar to the day when my daughter was born because it was that sense of elation and being so excited and relieved."

The surgery is scheduled to take place in February 2017 at the University of Wisconsin Hospital.

- In Steamboat Springs, Colorado, a similar story of amazing generosity took place. Retired teacher Tracy Bye, 53, donated a kidney to a former Soda Creek Elementary School student, Henry Howard, 29, after discovering she was a match.

Howard was not Bye's student, but she got to know him through his time on the student council. She eventually got to know his mother and sister after they became teachers at Steamboat Middle School, where Bye retired.

In 2015, Bye learned that Howard was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease and was in need of a kidney. She underwent testing at the University Hospital in Denver, where she learned she was a match. Without hesitation, she went through with the surgery and donated her kidney.

The kidney transplant took place on September 1 and was a success.



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on November 21, 2016

Published in the November 21, 2016 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 32, No. 22

Unlikely Driving Companion

Ohio State Highway Patrol Sergeant David Robinson went above and beyond the call of duty for Mark Ross of Indiana, who desperately needed a ride to Detroit to attend his teenage sister's funeral.

Ross learned that his sister had died in a car crash on September 25 and asked a friend to drive him from Indiana to Detroit so that he could be with his family. His friend agreed and the two sped on the highway in an effort to get to Detroit faster. Unfortunately, their speeding caused Sergeant Robinson to pull them over. The officer found out the driver had a suspended license, prompting him to place him under arrest and have the vehicle towed.

Ross was distraught because he needed to get to Detroit, but his friend was no longer available to help.

In a Facebook post, Ross recalled, "I explained to the officer that my sister had died and that I needed to get to my mother ASAP. I broke down crying, and he saw the sincerity in my cry. He reaches over and began praying over me and my family."

Sergeant Robinson then offered to drive Ross the 100 miles to Detroit. InsideEdition.com reported that Robinson dropped Ross off at a Detroit coffee shop, where he was retrieved by his family.

Robinson's kindness changed the way Ross views police officers. On Facebook, Ross wrote, "Everybody knows how much I dislike cops, but I am truly grateful for this guy. He gave me hope."

Ross's family was so moved by Robinson's actions that they invited him to attend the young girl's funeral, and he accepted.

Final Performance

Choir students at Alvin Junior High School in Alvin, Texas, gave their dying teacher one final, memorable performance before she took her last breath.

Choir teacher Mariana Walker was diagnosed with cancer and was under hospice care at her home, reported the *Miami Herald*, when her students paid her a visit to sing her a song called "Oceans" by the Christian group Hillsong.

"They had this beautiful song to sing for her," said Laura Sammons, Walker's best friend who was present during the memorable visit. "We opened the doors and just let the sound float in there."

Minutes after their performance ended, Walker died.

"She was a very special teacher to us," student Holly Darnell told KVUE. "We wanted our last words for her to be special."

Another student, Lauren Collins, explained the impact Walker had on her. "She was the person I could go to if I was having a bad day," said Collins. "She'd let me sit with her and we would be able to just sit there and talk."

Several students captured videos of the performance and shared them online. Many have been watched thousands of times.

KVUE reported that a memorial scholarship has been created in Walker's name.

— Raven Clabough



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