



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 9, 2017

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Goodness of America

Thanksgiving Blessings

Phoebe Brown of Independence, Missouri, found a winning lotto ticket on the floor of a supermarket and used it to offer those in need a special Thanksgiving.

Brown was at the Hy-Vee store with her mother on November 9 when she discovered the winning scratch-off worth \$100 on the floor. While many seven-year-olds would have used the winnings to buy toys or items that they have been wanting, Brown decided to donate the money to her school's canned goods drive.

Fox 4 News reported that with the help of Brown's donation, Sycamore Hills Elementary School was able to collect over 1,700 canned goods and household items.

According to her parents, Phoebe was inspired by her family's own struggles. "There have been times where I've been out of work, and we had nowhere to stay and our family's taken us in, and helped us out. We're thankful for our friends and our family," Joshua Brown, Phoebe's dad, said.

Bikes for Christmas

Christmas is the time for giving, and children in Charleston, South Carolina, and Little Deer Isle, Maine, were blessed with new bikes thanks to the goodness of others.

Gavin Eaton, a sixth grader in Little Deer Isle, saw to it that a child received a new bike for Christmas.

Eaton entered a drawing in the Books for Bikes program to win a brand new bike, but not for himself. He was already the proud owner of a new bike, which he received from his parents, so he decided to donate it to the Christmas is for Kids program.

"I had just gotten a new bike for Christmas that year, and so I knew that if I won the drawing I wanted to give the bike for donation," Eaton told the *Weekly Packet* on November 1. "I wanted to donate it because it makes me sad that some kids have to go without things for Christmas. This was my way of helping out."

The Books for Bikes program requires participants to read books and collect tickets every week for six weeks. Eaton reportedly read as many as he could to collect five tickets weekly for the six-week period, with the hopes of winning the bike and donating it.

No one knew of his intentions except his parents, who were moved by their son's actions. "I was super proud of him," Eaton's mother said.

In North Charleston, South Carolina, Pepperhill Elementary School teacher Katie Blomquist made it her goal to give every child in her school a new bike for Christmas. Blomquist conceived of her incredible idea when she took one of her students to Walmart so that he could pick out a present for his birthday. "He kept asking me for a bike, and I thought 'Gosh, I can't afford that,'" Blomquist said. "You assume every kid's grown up with a bike before, but there are literally five bikes that are ridden to school every day."

Blomquist told CBS 8 that because the school was located in a lower-income neighborhood, the students would really benefit from the new bikes. Some of the students walk as much as 30 minutes each way, to



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and from school, each day, and a bike would help make that commute a bit easier. Even for those whose commutes are short, however, Blomquist contends that a bike would give them an escape from their difficult surroundings.

“It’s freedom,” she said. “Just to ride your bike and clear your mind. You peddle so fast, and you get out anxiety and anger and just feel the wind on your face. There’s just a sense of freedom with that. I couldn’t think of anything else that’ll provide that.”

Blomquist decided that she wanted to make the students’ dreams come true by giving them each a new bike for Christmas. She reached out to a local bike shop, Affordabike, which offered her 650 bikes (one for each student at the school) at a discounted rate. The total cost was \$65,000.

“I wanted it to be the best Christmas gift ever,” she said. “A lot of kids don’t get Christmas gifts, [so] that’ll be a Christmas gift they’ll never forget.”

Blomquist created a GoFundMe campaign to help reach her goal. And the page has currently raised \$75,000, though because of the time required to assemble that many bikes, they will be a late Christmas gift — given in February.

According to CBS 8, various companies have donated bicycles to Blomquist, which she donated to other Title 1 elementary schools for their students.

Warm Winter

Second grader Ares Alonso of Waxahachie, Texas, made it his mission to ensure no child is cold this winter, Fox 4 News reported.

When his mother, Erica, asked him what he wanted for Christmas, his response shocked her.

“I asked him what he wanted for Christmas and he said he didn’t really need anything and asked him if he really didn’t and he said no. I kind of played on it a bit and asked what he was doing,” Alonso said. “He told me that maybe we could get gifts for other kids who need something, but I explained that there is already Toys for Tots and the Angel Trees and things like that where kids have a toy option. I suggested we look into something else and he then had the idea of what is now Keep Ellis County Warm.”

The family took on the project with enthusiasm. “It grew from there. It started with a question if we really could do it, then he asked his teachers about it and his friends if they would want to help,” Alonso explained. “I had to explain to him that it’s one thing for him to voluntarily give up his Christmas, but he couldn’t ask his friends to do that. We asked his friends to donate instead, so that’s how it became a donation drive.”

The family reached out to Target to host a donation box, and the store offered a \$100 shopping spree, which Ares used to purchase jackets, scarves, and gloves.

Donation boxes were set up in numerous places throughout Waxahachie so that people could donate clothing and outerwear.

To distribute the clothing they collected, the Alonsos selected Child & Adult Protective Services, Healing Hearts Center, and the Manna House to donate the goods.

Ares was happy to give up his Christmas presents so that others in need could have a better Christmas.



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“I don’t really need anything, I already have what I want so I want other people to have what they need,” Ares said.

— Raven Clabough



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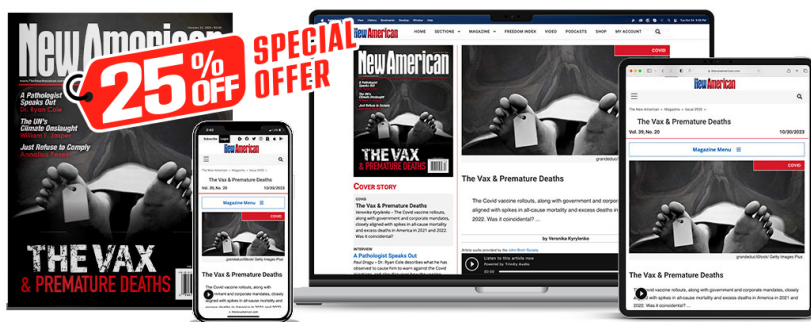
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