



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 19, 2019

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## The Goodness of America

### Are We There Yet?

When her autistic child was flying solo from Las Vegas to Portland, Alex Bjornson was concerned for her son's safety and mental well-being. She was later thrilled and grateful to learn that he befriended a passenger who sat beside him on the plane and that he had a wonderful trip.

Seven-year-old Landon was flying to Portland to visit his father on June 27, and his mother, Alex, was concerned because Landon has high-functioning autism. She decided to write a note for Landon to hand to whomever he sat beside on the plane in the hopes of explaining his condition and preparing the passenger for what to expect.

She warned the stranger that he may be prone to frequently asking "Are we there yet?" and may become anxious during takeoff and landing.

"He has high functioning autism, which means he is very smart and loving but he tends to get emotional when he is scared and can get hyper," the note read.

Along with her phone number and a \$10 bill to incentivize the passenger to be patient, the note included the following plea: "If you could please find it in your heart to make him feel comfortable and safe, I would be forever grateful."

Alex was moved to tears when she received a text message from a stranger named Ben Pedraza, who happened to be the passenger sitting beside Landon on the plane.

The text message included a selfie of Ben and a very happy-looking Landon, along with a detailed description of how the two enjoyed their flight together.

The text read, "I was Landon's seat neighbor for his flight to Portland. He did ask if we were there yet several times but he was a great travel buddy. We had a good time and played a few rounds of rock-paper-scissors. He's a great kid and you're a lucky mom. I appreciate the \$10 but it wasn't necessary. I donated it to Autism-Society.org in honor of Landon."

Alex took to Facebook to share her story, and expressed her immense gratitude for Pedraza for all he did.

"I am so grateful to this individual, and that there are still kind people in the world who make a difference like I try myself to do as well," she wrote.

Pedraza later told Yahoo! Lifestyle that he was particularly moved by Landon's situation after the child informed him that he was bullied in school for having autism.

### Chick-fil-A Employees Rock!

Chick-fil-A employee Daryl Howard is being praised for helping a World War II veteran with a flat tire, Fox5NY reported.

The 96-year-old veteran is known to the Chick-fil-A employees as "Mr. Lee." When he arrived at the Severn, Maryland, restaurant on July 11, he was visibly shaken and near tears, the employees recall. Lee told the staff he was driving on three tires and just barely made it to the restaurant safely, and when he mentioned that he didn't have any help to change the tire, Howard reportedly sprang into action without hesitation.



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“As soon as he finished his sentence, Daryl informed me he needed to help this gentleman right now,” restaurant manager Rudy Somoza said. “Daryl jumped on into action without hesitation.”

Somoza snapped photos to capture the kindness of his colleague.

“Daryl has always been so helpful to anyone in need and deserves recognition,” he explained. According to Somoza, Daryl was able to fix Lee’s tire in just about 15 minutes.

## **Not All Heroes Wear Capes**

A 20-year-old Aberdeen, Washington, man rushed into a burning house to save his niece July 4 and suffered 2nd and 3rd degree burns, but would “do it again,” he told Komo News.

When the fire erupted, Derrick Byrd recalled, he immediately jumped into action to help his sister Kayla. While Kayla ran upstairs to get her three children, Byrd ran downstairs and outside of the house and stood outside the window to catch the children as they jumped from the roof just outside of their window.

“I caught Junior and I caught Baby Rory out of Kayla’s window,” Byrd said.

However, the remaining child, eight-year-old Mercedes, was afraid to jump. Kayla then fell off the roof, leaving Mercedes, who fell back into the burning room through the window.

Byrd knew what he had to do. “She was screaming my name, so I wasn’t just going to let her sit there,” he said.

“And I just ran up the stairs and pushed through the fire,” he said. “I could feel it burning me. I got her and took my shirt off and put it around her face so she wouldn’t breath in any smoke and I just carried her out as fast as I could.”

Byrd and all three children were treated at the local hospital for burns, but fortunately, thanks to the heroics of a very brave uncle, all survived.

The fire was a devastating one, as the family home is considered by firefighters to be a complete loss. First responders were shocked that no one was seriously injured in the blaze and credited that to Byrd.

“I would do it again,” Byrd told KOMO News from his hospital bed, where he lay covered in bandages from his burns.

## **1,899**

A church in Wyoming, Michigan, paid off the medical debt of 1,899 families, totaling nearly \$2 million, with just a \$15,000 donation.

According to WOOD TV, Grand Rapids First partnered with RIP Medical Debt, a nonprofit that purchases medical debt for pennies on the dollar.

“It took a \$15,000 donation to help eliminate \$1.8 million worth of medical debt that will never be able to be paid by these folks,” said Sam Rijfkoogel, the lead pastor of the church.

Though the families remain anonymous owing to medical privacy laws, they were notified in July about the incredible gift through a letter from RIP Medical Debt.

For Pastor Rijfkoogel, the gesture is meant to be a show of godly love.

“We just want to show them that there are people out there that love you, and more importantly, God



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loves you. We're trying to show you that he does (love you) in this tangible way," Rijkogel told WOOD TV.

— Raven Clabough



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