



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 6, 2020

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The Goodness of America

Birthday Toys for Tots

Nine-year-old Sophia Burns asked her friends to bring unwrapped toys to her birthday party in October so she could donate them to Toys for Tots at Christmas in this story out of Saginaw, Michigan.

Sophia told MLive.com, "I have too many toys. My parents give me everything I want and I care about others, not just myself."

Sophia and her parents hosted a party with 29 friends in attendance on October 20, and each brought at least one toy to give. In all, Sophia collected 34 toys that day.

Sophia's mother, Shanna, was overwhelmed by her daughter's kindness.

"It didn't really hit me until after the party," said Shanna. "I remember Sophia telling me, 'There are a bunch of people who will be very happy for Christmas.' She's 9 going on 14."

When asked what compelled her to donate her birthday presents, Sophia's response was simple. "We're just a giving family and not a receiving," she said, adding she wants to make this an annual tradition in the hopes of inspiring others to do the same.

This is not the first time Sophia sacrificed for others. Shanna told MLive.com Sophia donated eight inches of her hair to Wigs for Kids, collected 25 items for Girls on the Run, and tutors an autistic girl at her school through a special program.

According to Sophia's father, Marvin, Sophia inherited her generosity from her mother. "I'll get into heaven because my wife has a plus one," he told MLive.com. "It's so rewarding as a father and husband."

Sophia and her family delivered the toys to the Saginaw Township Fire Station 3 on December 8. Sophia even got a chance to ride the local fire truck, WNEM reports.

Adoption Party

When five-year-old Michael Orlando Clark, Jr. went to the Kent County courthouse in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to finalize his adoption by Andrea Melvin and Dave Eaton, he wanted his entire class to share in his joy and witness the memorable occasion.

And the adoption ceremony was a joyous event, Wood TV reported. Each of Michael's classmates from Wealthy Elementary in East Grand Rapids was given the opportunity to tell the judge how much they loved him. The students even held up hearts on a stick to show their support for their friend.

"Michael is my best friend," offered a boy named Steven, the BBC reported.

"My name is Lily and I love Michael," a little girl told the judge.

Michael's teacher also had the opportunity to speak. "We began the school year as a family. Family doesn't have to be DNA, because family is support and love," she told the judge.

The judge who oversaw the ceremony was moved by the display of love shown to Michael and his newfound family.

"Sometimes their journeys have been very long, they've included miracle and change for the children



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and family and incredible community support as you're able to see today in Michael's adoption hearing," Judge Patricia Gardner said.

"His whole kindergarten class and school being here to say 'we love you,' and 'we support you' and 'we'll be here not only today but in all the years in the future.'"

Michael was one of 37 children adopted at the courthouse on December 5, the *New York Daily News* reported.

Bullied Teen Makes Ton of Newfound Friends

A bullied teen in York City, Pennsylvania, got the surprise of his life when he received loads of cards and gifts from the local community for his 13th birthday and a surprise visit from strangers turned friends.

The Castillo family moved to York City from New Jersey, hoping for a fresh start, the *York Daily Record (YDR)* reports, but the move proved to be a difficult one for their son, Roberto, who was severely bullied in one of the city public schools. At one point, Roberto's mother, Brendaly, even had to file a police report after Roberto's shoulder was dislocated by one of his bullies.

Roberto is now at the York Academy Regional Charter School, where he is reportedly doing much better academically and socially.

But when Roberto was preparing to celebrate his 13th birthday on December 7, his mother was concerned he would not have any friends to invite. She decided to take a risk and post a message on "The Movement's" Facebook page in mid-November, asking if any of the members would be interested in sending birthday cards to her son. The Movement is described on its Facebook page as a group that promotes "non-violence and economic equality in York County through programs, events, and strategic partnerships that strengthen our community."

Brendaly was astonished by the response. Dozens reached out and asked for the Castillos' address so they could send cards.

The Zero2OneHundred Motorcycle club, a 14-member motorcycle club that takes pride in giving back to the local community, and youth in particular, reached out to Brendaly and said a few of the members wanted to hand-deliver not only cards, but birthday presents.

According to *YDR*, on December 7, the quiet of Castillo's neighborhood was interrupted by the revving of engines on several motorcycles.

"Motorcycle club members who go by the nicknames Bratt, BX, Slim, Rolle, Flip, Muggz, CeeCee and Maine gathered around Roberto's dining room table and added to the pile of cards and gifts from other people over the past couple of weeks," *YDR* reported.

The motorcycle club could not stay long, however, because they reportedly "had another kid's day to brighten on their Saturday agenda," *YDR* reported.

Still, Roberto's birthday surprise was more than he could have imagined. He received more than 40 cards and several gifts and balloons on his birthday.

Roberto was astonished by the outpouring of love he received on his special day.

"I didn't expect anything. I thought I'd have a calm birthday going out to eat, spending time with family,



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and that's it," he said.

— Raven Clabough



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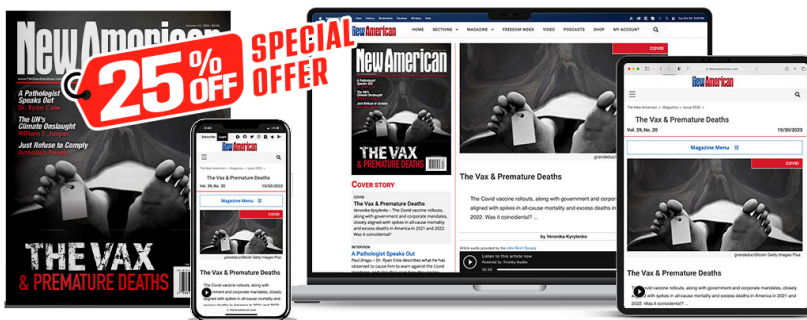
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