



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 19, 2021

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## The Goodness of America

### Wheels to Work

Chris Lewis of Pisgah Forest, North Carolina, has made it his mission to refurbish old cars for neighbors who have no means of transportation, donating his time to the Sharing House Wheels to Work program.

According to the organization's website, Sharing House Wheels to Work accepts donated vehicles from community donors to be refurbished by a "gifted volunteer" (Lewis), who ensures the cars are "road-worthy." Individuals who wish to receive a vehicle through the program must pass a driver background check and go through a budgeting process.

WRAL in Raleigh reported that those who receive a car pay \$20 a month for 24 months for their car, to help pay for repairs on more cars. "We just feel like this gets people farther ahead by having their own independence," explains Susan Matthews, empowerment director for Sharing House Wheels to Work.

For Sidney Lowe, who received a 1994 Mercury Villager through the program, the car has been "a godsend." And Lewis generously helped her to pay off the car 14 months early "so that I could help out the next person," he told WRAL.

"He makes the magic happen," Matthews said of Lewis. "Chris is the face of the organization because he meets the people when they want to give a donation."

Lewis, who works on the cars in his own garage, has refurbished 80 vehicles since he started serving the program nine years ago, Breitbart News reported. "The last thing you want is a single mom stranded somewhere," he said.

### Seven Miles

Teenager Jayden Sutton of Cobb County, Georgia, has a full-time job at a local restaurant, but without a vehicle of his own, he was making a trek to work on foot several miles each way — that is, until he met Lavonda Wright, who wanted to help the hard-working young man.

"When I get out of school around 3:30, I will go straight to work. I walk to work and I work six to eight hours and get off and walk straight home," Sutton told Fox 11 on January 14. Prior to getting a car, Sutton said he usually got home around midnight and would get a few hours of sleep before waking up the next morning for school.

"I knew if I had to walk to work every day to get a car that's what I was going to do," he said. "If I had to walk home then that's what I was going to do."

Wright's son, who went to school with Sutton, recognized him as he was walking fast down the road and asked Lavonda if they could give Sutton a drive to work that day. Wright was happy to volunteer, but knew she needed to help Sutton figure out a more long-term solution.

Wright decided to post Sutton's story to social media and set up a GoFundMe page for the young man, which quickly raised \$7,000. Wright then contacted Nally Honda dealership in Union City, and the owner agreed to reduce the price of one of the vehicles to ensure \$7,000 was enough to cover a car and the related expenses.



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Naturally, Sutton was beyond grateful for the generous gift. “I just want to say thank you. A million times. You don’t understand how much,” he told Wright after he was gifted the car, according to WAGA in Atlanta.

## Exercises in Empathy

Sy Newsom Green’s future at a private, all-boys Catholic high school in California was in jeopardy three years ago when it became clear his parents would no longer be able to make tuition payments. Thankfully for Green, an unexpected group came forward to help: inmates at California’s Soledad Prison. Because of their intervention, Green was able to graduate from Palma School and is now a student at San Francisco’s Academy of Art University.

When Green was a freshman at Palma School, his father suffered a heart attack and required a transplant, and his mother was in an accident that impaired her vision, ultimately causing both parents to lose their jobs. Green, who had excelled in his studies, feared he would have to leave his beloved school.

But inmates at Soledad Prison managed to pool their income from working jobs as prisoners and then obtained a bit of outside help to raise \$32,000 to cover the boy’s expenses through graduation.

The inmates never would have had the opportunity to help were it not for a book club called Exercises in Empathy, which brought Palma students and teachers to the prison to discuss books with inmates.

“They go in thinking ‘monster,’ and they come out thinking ‘a man, a human being.’ They’ve done bad things, but there are no throwaway people here,” said teacher Jim Micheletti, who launched the program seven years ago.

According to CNN, two inmates in the program were deeply inspired by a book they read in 2016 called *Miracle on the River Kwai* by Ernest Gordon, which chronicles a group of prisoners of war whose mind-sets transformed from that of “survival of the fittest” to one of self-sacrifice. Jason Bryant, who was serving a 26-year sentence for armed robbery, and fellow inmate Ted Gray decided they wanted to do something transformative. They came up with the idea for a scholarship fund for a deserving Palma student. The timing was just right for Green.

Bryant told the *Washington Post* that of the 2,000 inmates in his unit, about one in three agreed to donate twice a year. Donations were as small as \$1 and as big as \$100.

When Green and his family learned of the scholarship, they were emotional. “I broke down and started crying because I knew where it was coming from,” said Sy’s father, Frank Green.

Sy added, “It definitely was a surprise and a huge honor. That’s not something that happens every day.”

Bryant said the scholarship opportunity gave the prisoners something they desperately needed. “I think that inherently most people, even those of us who have made the worst decision in our lives, want to be a part of something good,” he explained. “This idea when we started was just so good: We can help some young man get a head start that a lot of us didn’t have.”

Bryant was granted clemency after serving 20 years and is now the director of restorative programs at CROP, a nonprofit group that works to reduce recidivism by giving ex-prisoners access to job opportunities and housing.



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