

Colleen's Contemplations – July 2011

Once upon a time... one mom organized a few other moms in an effort to make certain every child had a warm coat. From that humble beginning people came together to do more to help kids in their community feel connected and cared for.

This little village decided that every child, no matter what it took, needed to have everything every other child took for granted. Kids need more than just warm coats in the winter. Kids need to have clothes to wear, food to eat, and shelter from the weather. But the little village didn't stop there.

They wanted those kids to have all the little things that their classmates had. They should have snazzy new notebooks and folders and pencils for a new year of classes. They should have things that help to make their houses into homes that they'd feel good about opening up to friends. The parents should have the work clothes and transportation to get to jobs. Everyone should have a bed of their own that gives them rest and peace.

So this little village, without using anyone's tax dollars, set up and supported a "free store", where every child could come pick out something for themselves or their families. The free store was a place to find items they need, as well as items that make them feel special. That little free store grew to be a place that the village could be proud of.

As need in the village grew, the little free store grew in new and exciting ways. People in the village started sharing in ways that felt important to them.

- One person brought scholarships for basketball camps.
- One family gave out baseball tickets for other families to enjoy.
- One person decided school seniors should have free pictures taken.
- Another person felt strongly about prom dresses, so every girl could feel like a princess.
- One person wanted to honor every mother on Mother's day.
- And yet another person felt everyone's birthday deserved to be celebrated with at least a card and a cake.
- One single mom + kids decided to adopt another single mom + kids at Christmastime.
- One person decided to help write resumes and teach people how to do well in an interview.
- Several families buying new cars decided to give their old but still running cars to people who needed reliable transportation.
- One person spent a summer taking in old bikes and fixing them up to give away.

People gave whatever their hearts compelled them to. That little free store overflowed with wonderful stuff, and especially love. That little village created a warm friendly place for people to go for help, for guidance, and for connection. Families were strengthened, kids flourished, and the little village not only had a way to help people, but a way to teach their children about caring for others.

And as long as people see the value in helping others and step out to do the things they feel strongly about, they live happily ever after.

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