

## KINDNESS WITHOUT GETTING CAUGHT

*The Quiet Power of Doing Good (Even When No One Is Watching)*

When I was a kid, if you'd asked me what community service meant, I probably would have pictured early mornings, muddy shoes, and a lot of hauling things around. Back then, it just felt like something our family did. Looking back now, I realize those small moments shaped how I see people, responsibility, and purpose.

Some of my earliest memories of service involve my dad and his firm belief in doing good without an audience. He used to say the best kind of good deed was the one you did "without getting caught." When I was young, we spent a lot of time at the Boys Club and YMCA, and many of the kids we played sports with came from families with very little. One night, my dad took me shopping for football gear for a boy who couldn't afford pads or a helmet. We quietly dropped the equipment on his porch after dark, hoping no one would know it was us. They opened the door before we could sneak away, and I still remember the gratitude in that mother's eyes. Even as a kid, I knew we had done something meaningful. That moment stayed with me.

Service became part of our family rhythm as I grew up. Through the church and Boy Scouts, weekends often meant pitching in. We picked up trash, planted trees, cleared out invasive honeysuckle vines that seemed to grow overnight, and helped build a community garden where kids could learn and play. We repaired buildings at a children's home and helped construct homes with Habitat for Humanity. I wouldn't call myself especially handy, but I could follow instructions, and there was something deeply satisfying about working side by side with people who simply wanted to make things better.

When my own kids came along, I loved seeing that same spirit take root in them. They helped collect coats for people in need and visited nursing homes

to spend time with residents who didn't get many visitors. Watching your children learn kindness firsthand is one of the most rewarding experiences a parent can have. It reminds you that service has a ripple effect.



One experience that really stayed with me was volunteering at the Columbus Dream Center, helping prepare and serve meals to people who rely on that place for food, clothing, and basic necessities. It's eye-opening. You realize how many people just need a little encouragement and a reminder that someone cares. You can't fix everything in one day, but you can make that day a little better.



These days, my daughter and her husband have taken service to a level that truly inspires me. They've fostered about a dozen children, from infants to preschoolers. It's not easy, and it can be heartbreaking when kids return to difficult situations. But for a season of their lives, those children know stability, care, and love. Sometimes that's enough to change the trajectory of a life.



My sons helping with our church's Habitat for Humanity project.

I often think about the old starfish story. Someone walking along a beach throws stranded starfish back into the ocean one by one. When asked why bother, since you can't save them all, the answer is simple: It mattered to that one.

Community service doesn't solve every problem. It won't make headlines most of the time. But it changes people, both those receiving help and those giving it.

And if it inspires someone else to pay it forward, the impact keeps going long after the moment passes.

*- Jim Monast*

# DREAM DAYS, GOLDEN YEARS

## PEACEFUL PLANS FOR A PROSPEROUS RETIREMENT

Sometimes, the strongest preretirement plans are the ones that *don't* prioritize financial necessities.

As the adage suggests, you don't live to work; you work to *live*. Your later years should be a season of well-earned happiness and contentment, not a period of denying yourself things that bring you joy. Successful retirement planning combines living well with living *richly*, prioritizing peace of mind over pinching pennies. Your retirement plan shouldn't just be a financial blueprint; it should also serve as a *lifestyle* guide.



Contrary to popular belief, "living comfortably" doesn't just mean having the ability to pay your bills each month. Research suggests that although 77% of U.S. retirees succeed in accumulating enough money to manage ongoing living expenses in their older years, only 43% of them considered their *emotional health* when building their retirement plans. Considering these figures, it's safe to say many Americans achieve retirement only to discover they're too constrained financially to pursue their desired pastimes, personal relationships, or purpose in later life.

To best prepare for a happy retirement, ask yourself these key questions.

### WHAT ARE YOUR PERSONAL GROWTH GOALS?

Have you long dreamt of a fun hobby that your work schedule prevented you from pursuing? Would attending art classes broaden your creative side? Are you interested in doing more volunteer work in your community? Retirement can afford

you these opportunities, but only if you budget for them now.

### WHOM WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPEND TIME WITH?

If you can't wait for a chance to finally spend every major holiday with your grandkids who live 3,000 miles away or join that bowling team or book club, you'll soon have time to spend with loved ones and even make new friends. With careful planning, you can devise a worry-free plan for more precious moments with the people who matter most to you.

### WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE?

This question is the most significant of them all. Is a multistory home becoming less desirable as aging impacts your mobility? Are you looking for a sunnier climate after spending way too many decades shoveling snow? Our address can have a significant impact on our attitude, so consider your retirement home base carefully and explore ways to ensure your retirement cash flow can support it.

## Nice Weather Doesn't Remove Workplace Risks

### DON'T LET A SIMPLE MISTAKE TURN INTO TIME OFF WORK

Spring's mild mornings can be tempting, with clear skies, warmer air, and the feeling that everything's easier. But nicer days don't automatically mean safer work. If you work outdoors or even travel between job sites, this season comes with risks that can catch you off guard. Protecting yourself now can help you avoid injuries, missed paychecks, and the stress of a workers' compensation claim later.

#### STAY READY FOR WEATHER SWINGS.

Spring has a reputation for changing its mind quickly. A warm morning can turn cold by afternoon, and dry pavement can become slick after a sudden rainstorm. The best way to protect yourself is to plan for the unexpected. Wear layers you can add or remove throughout the day, keep rain gear nearby, and make sure your vehicle is ready for both cold snaps and heavy rain. Being prepared means fewer surprises and fewer chances to get hurt.

#### WATCH YOUR STEP WHEN IT GETS SLIPPERY.

Wet sidewalks, muddy job sites, and uneven ground make slips and falls far more likely this time of year. These accidents are one of the most common causes of workplace injuries. Protect yourself by wearing shoes with strong traction, slowing down on wet stairs or ramps, and checking ladders before climbing. Small precautions can prevent big setbacks.

#### DON'T TRUST STORED EQUIPMENT.

Spring often marks the return of tools and machinery that sat unused through winter. Before using anything, take a moment to check for loose parts, worn tires, or other issues. If something doesn't look right, speak up. Using faulty equipment puts your safety at risk, and no job is worth that.

#### BE ALERT TO SEASONAL HAZARDS.

Spring also brings insects and wildlife back into the picture. Tick bites, bee stings, and



unexpected encounters can quickly turn into medical emergencies. Wear protective clothing when possible and report concerns right away.

#### PROTECTING YOURSELF PROTECTS YOUR FUTURE.

No one plans on getting hurt at work. Taking simple steps to stay safe can help you avoid injuries, lost wages, and complicated claims. Your health, your paycheck, and your peace of mind are worth the extra attention.

# LLAMAS LAY DOWN THE LAW

## 8 LLAMAS, ONE TERRIFIED THIEF, ZERO ESCAPE ROUTES

One unlucky thief in England recently learned a valuable lesson: Never underestimate a group of determined llamas.

It all began on a quiet evening in Derbyshire when animals on a rural property suddenly sounded the alarm. Their unusual commotion tipped off the homeowners that something wasn't right. Sure enough, a man suspected of robbing a nearby home had hopped a fence and chosen the worst possible escape route ... straight into a field occupied by eight very alert llamas.

Instead of finding a quick path to freedom, the intruder found himself in the middle of an unexpected standoff. As he ran through the field, the towering animals charged at him and formed what can only be described as a fluffy security perimeter.

According to owner Heidi Price, the llamas take their job very seriously. "We've got eight llamas,

and llamas don't like people entering their personal space after dusk," she told SWNS news agency. "Our llamas galloped over to him and surrounded him. They literally made a circle around him, and then started releasing their warning cry, which sounds like an old man laughing."

If that description alone doesn't rattle your nerves, imagine hearing it in the dark while being surrounded by 6-foot-tall animals. Price said the suspect "didn't know what to do next and looked absolutely terrified."

Her partner soon arrived with their dog, who enthusiastically added to the chaos by barking around the man's feet. With the llama patrol holding their ground, the intruder had nowhere to go. Price explained that her

partner escorted the man back toward the fence, where police were waiting to make the arrest.

Price joked to SWNS, "But the llamas made a citizen's arrest. I was wondering if they would get some sort of citizen's recognition award!"

As if that wasn't impressive enough, Price explained their natural instincts: "Llamas are really interesting animals. Their only defense mechanism is spitting ... and they were close to extinction before it was recognized that they have these incredible guard dog abilities."

Despite the dramatic encounter, the llamas remained perfectly polite. In fact, Price noted they "kept good manners, even when faced with adversity."

Who needs a security system when you've got eight fluffy crime fighters on patrol?



# SUDOKU

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ANSWER



## EATS WITH ELLIE CHEESY ASPARAGUS ORZOTTO

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 tbsp plus 1/4 cup olive oil, divided
- 1 bunch of asparagus, trimmed and peeled
- 1 leek, halved and sliced
- 1 1/2 cup orzo
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 3 cups broth
- 1/2 tsp salt
- Black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 1 oz Parmesan, grated
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1/4 cup basil leaves

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a pot over medium-high heat, heat 2 tbsp oil. Add asparagus, cover, and cook 4 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board to cool, then cut into 1-inch pieces.
2. Heat remaining oil. Add leek, season with salt, and cook 3 minutes.
3. Stir in orzo and garlic and cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes.
4. Add wine and cook 2-3 minutes.
5. Stir in broth, 1/2 tsp salt, and pepper, then simmer, covered, on low heat for 12-15 minutes.
6. Add peas to orzo, cover, and cook 2 minutes.
7. Remove from heat, add Parmesan, cream, and butter, and stir until butter melts. Stir in asparagus and basil.

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# THE ORIGINAL RAP BATTLES WERE HELD IN CASTLES LONG BEFORE FREESTYLES, POETS WENT FOR THE JUGULAR

If you think rap battles are a modern invention born on crowded street corners, history would like a word. Long before microphones, turntables, or diss tracks dropped on streaming platforms, people were already lining up to watch verbal sparring matches every bit as sharp, ruthless, and entertaining as today's lyrical showdowns.

Back in medieval Scotland, poets squared off using nothing but their wits and a well-stocked (*and oftentimes vulgar*) vocabulary. These exchanges, called *flyting*, weren't casual insults tossed over ale; they were performances, often delivered in front of royalty, where clever wordplay and creative humiliation were the main event. The goal wasn't just to insult your opponent, but to do it with style, rhythm, and enough imagination to make the audience laugh, gasp, or groan in appreciation. If that sounds familiar, it should.

Some of the most famous verbal face-offs were preserved in poetry, complete with biting humor and language that feels surprisingly modern. These poets went for the jugular, piling on jokes, exaggerations, and personal attacks with gleeful abandon. Even hundreds of years later, the spirit of those

exchanges is unmistakable: Say it louder, smarter, and more memorably than the person standing across from you.

Scotland wasn't alone in this tradition. Across the world, cultures developed their own versions of poetic smack talk. Ancient Irish poets built reputations on their ability to verbally dismantle rivals. Norse mythology includes legendary moments where the gods themselves traded insults. Similar traditions popped up in places as far as Japan, West Africa, and the Middle East. Wherever humans gathered, someone eventually decided to turn clever insults into an art form.

Over time, these formal verbal duels faded, but their influence never really disappeared. You can hear echoes of them in classic literature and theater, and later in modern music. When rap battles rose to prominence in the 1980s, they didn't invent the concept but revived it.

Today's battles may use beats instead of lutes and rhyme with rhythm instead of courtly verse, but the heart of the contest is the same. It's proof that no matter the century, humans love a well-crafted verbal takedown, especially when delivered with confidence, creativity, and just the right amount of swagger.

