

# The good news newsletter

## 1. Neighbors — one 2 years old, the other 99 — found friendship during quarantine

Over the last year, Benjamin Olson, 2, and Mary O'Neill, 99, have gone from neighbors to the best of friends. Benjamin, his parents, and his brother Noah live next door to Mary in Minneapolis, and over the course of the pandemic, Benjamin and Mary have grown close from their backyards, separated by a chain-link fence. They've invented a game called "cane ball" – Benjamin kicks a ball to the fence, and Mary hits it back with her cane — and now that he can open Mary's gate on his own, Benjamin regularly comes over to blow bubbles and hand her fistfuls of dirt. Mary is "his first best friend," Benjamin's mom, Sarah Olson, told KARE 11, and she is "so happy they have each other." Mary is a widow whose family lives out of state, and she now has pictures of Benjamin and Noah on display in her home. "They're the closest thing to grandchildren I have around here," she said.

## 2. Doctor turns wedding flowers into bouquets for patients

Couples can spend thousands on flowers for their weddings, and Eleanor Love found a way for those stems to be used again. Before graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine, Love wanted to lift the spirits of severely ill patients. She started calling wedding coordinators to see if brides and grooms would be willing to donate their flowers after their ceremonies and receptions were over, for her to repurpose into bouquets for patients. Love launched her project, The Simple Sunflower, in 2019, and nearly every couple she's called has been happy to give their flowers to the cause. The Simple Sunflower now has over 200 volunteers, and in two years, has dropped off more

than 760 bouquets at Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center. Love told *The Washington Post* that "being able to help deliver the flowers to those patients is very meaningful because you just see those patients' faces light up. You connect with them on a different level."

### 3. After collecting thousands of titles, woman fulfils her dream of opening a bookstore

Ten years ago, Carole-Ann Warburton quit her job in order to follow her dream and open a bookstore — and she hasn't looked back. Her shop in Somerset, England, called The Book Rest, is now celebrating a decade in business. After Warburton became ill in 2010, her daughter suggested she retire from her desk job and move into a new home. One place Warburton saw for sale was an old store with an apartment on top. It "was a godawful place," she told *The Guardian*, but Warburton "fell in love with it" anyway. She put in her notice at work, and right before Warburton's 65th birthday, The Book Rest was open. She's always loved reading, and over the years amassed quite a collection of books — about 9,000, which line her store's shelves. The shop doesn't make or lose any money, but Warburton said hearing from customers that they found exactly what they were looking for is priceless.

### 4. High school students design car seat attachment to use with wheelchairs

When teacher Chelsie King asked students at her school to find a way for her husband to go around the block in his wheelchair with their newborn, they were up for the challenge. King's husband, Jeremy, underwent brain surgery, and since then it's been difficult for him to keep his balance. Chelsie works at the Bullis School in Germantown, Maryland, and asked students in the "Making for Social Good" class for assistance. The students spoke with the Kings about their needs, conducted

research on infant car seats, and then drafted 3D models of their designs. Two projects were selected for the students to make — one that connected an infant car seat to Jeremy's wheelchair and another that attached an entire stroller to the wheelchair. "Children grow and they grow out of a car seat, so we wanted Mr. King to be able to walk with his son no matter what age he was," student Jacob Zlotnitsky told *Good Morning America*.

## 5. South Carolina mechanic gives new life to clunkers, then donates them to people in need

Eliot Middleton has never met a car he couldn't fix. It doesn't matter how many miles or dents it may have — this certified mechanic can take any vehicle bound for the junkyard and get it up and running. He lives in South Carolina's Lowcountry, and knows that when people in rural communities don't have their own cars, they usually have to walk to where they need to go. "There's no public transportation," Middleton told CBS News in June. "There's no Ubers, there's no taxis, or nothing like that." That's why he started fixing up old cars in his spare time and donating them to people in need. After Middleton's story aired, his phone "started exploding all over the place," he said during a follow-up interview last week. Thanks to viewers, nearly 800 cars have been donated to his cause, in addition to \$100,000 in cash to cover new parts and repair work.

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