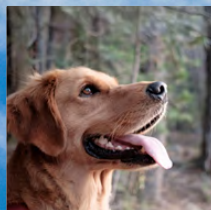
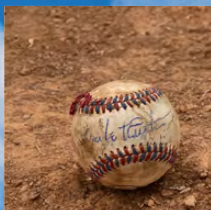
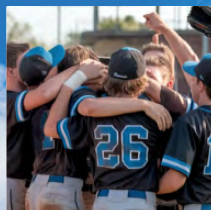
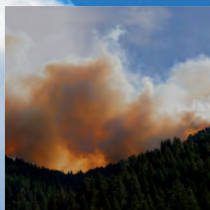
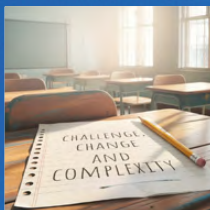
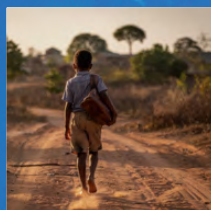
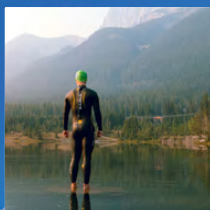
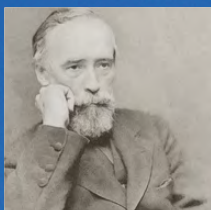
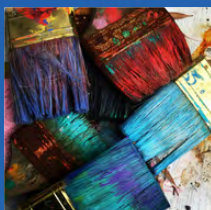
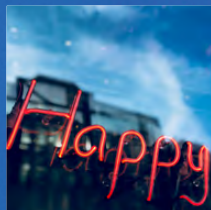
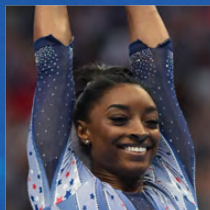


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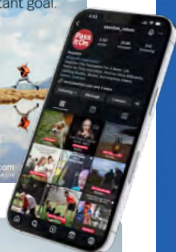
Positive, Uplifting and Inspirational



VOLUME
-TWO-

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Forward

Stories give our lives purpose and create a legacy of who we are and what we've done. Each one in this collection is true. They tell of overcoming, meeting unexpected challenges, innovation, the joys of life, lessons learned, and hope restored. As often happens, a story well told reminds us of our own important stories. We trust you will find a part of yourself described among these pages.

We hope you enjoy reading these stories and if you come upon something that lights a spark of inspiration...PassItOn®



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1

Simone Biles Springs Her Way Into History.

The sprite athlete with the eternal smile is vaulting her way back into the Olympics after overcoming a bad case of the “twisties.”

When Simone Biles takes flight, it's impossible to imagine anything weighing her down. Her ability to toss her body in the most difficult moves in gymnastics has made her one of the greatest gymnasts in the sport's history.

One of her moves is named after her because she is the only gymnast ever to accomplish it in competition, the Biles II. It is a double-tucked somersault with a triple twist on the floor. Yes, on the floor. It's something you have to watch in slow motion to appreciate. When Biles debuted the move, the commentator exclaimed: "Simone Biles has enough gold medals—give this girl a crown!" The confidence required to pull off the stunning move seems impossible to fit into such a compact package. Yet understanding Biles' journey is even more impressive.

When Simone was a baby, her mother, unable to take care of her children, gave them up to the foster care system. Three years later, Simone was adopted by her paternal grandfather. She discovered gymnastics on a school field trip at age 6 and took to it immediately. Six years later, she switched to homeschooling so she could train for 30 hours a week. At 14, she competed in the National Gymnastics Championships and was named to the Junior National Team.

Simone's her coaches and teammates most noted her drive and toughness—she competed the day after being hospitalized with a kidney stone. It was no surprise that she made the U.S. Olympic Team. At 16 years old, she won gold in the World Championships. She went on to win 37 Olympic and World Championship medals.

After all her success, Biles made the news for something she didn't do: compete. In the 2020 Olympic Games, Simone seemed off-kilter. She stepped off the mat

on a tumbling pass, stumbled on the balance beam, reduced her midair twist on the vault from 2.5 to 1.5 and had a near fall on the landing. Citing mental health challenges, Simone withdrew. She was roundly criticized by Russian newspapers but was supported by her teammates.

Life is not easy for a kid thrust into the limelight at the young age Biles had been. The hype surrounding her coming into the Games must have been overwhelming. What the rest of the world didn't know was what Biles was feeling. An aunt she was very close to had passed away unexpectedly two days before the competition. Years before, she had been molested by the infamous doctor Larry Nassar, abuse she had gone public about in 2018. The "twisties" that sometimes interfered with gymnasts' ability to orient themselves midair seemed mild compared to the weight she was carrying.

Biles took a break to sort things out. With the help of coaches, family and an understanding new husband, she tackled these mental issues the way she did physical challenges: head-on.

Biles made it back to the Olympics in 2024. Part of her preparation included competing at the U.S. Gymnastics Championships. While many may have been nervous, Biles was not. She became the first gymnast to win nine all-around titles at the event, with the highest total score ever recorded at the Olympic Quad. For all her accomplishments in the air, Biles remains grounded—a legacy that will live on as long as her unmatched skill and power in the arena.

COME BACK...
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2

**Teach Your
Children.**



How Graham Nash is still leading children into a better future.

As a teenager, Graham Nash co-founded The Hollies with his school friend, Allan Clarke. They became one of the most popular groups to emerge from the UK as part of the “British Invasion”. Named after their idol Buddy Holly, the Hollies began touring in the United States in 1969 which in time led to Graham meeting David Crosby and Stephen Stills with whom he created one of the most distinctive blends of voices in rock and roll history: Crosby Stills & Nash. Among Graham’s songwriting contributions to CSN and soon thereafter to CSNY was a song never recorded by the Hollies but a perfect fit for CSNY: “Teach Your Children”. The tender call-out to be attentive to your children and to encourage them to dream is a timeless reminder of our responsibilities and an awareness that as they grow into those dreams, they will always love you. The song then takes a turn and admonishes children to teach their parents, to share dreams with them, thus creating a mutual bond of trust and strong shoulders to lean on.

Graham Nash has never lost sight of his sensitivity to children and the world they will inherit. On Nash’s new release, *Now*, recorded at 81 years old, his song “A Better Life” explores the contagious optimism of an introspective observer who sings, “The world has changed, but the soul remains.”

As children, the road ahead seems long and obscured by many turns. With the guidance of the older generation, sharing the lessons learned and the ones that should be forgotten, we can (hope to) hear them say, that we left them a better life; a life more manageable, more likely to give them space to grow and in turn, reach back and give us that steady shoulder we need when our legs are feeble and our backs a little weakened by the load we carried.

No matter your age, and what you have accomplished, you can always take the time to make a better life for somebody. As Graham Nash says, “Although children are 25% of the population, they are 100% of our future.” Reach out by reaching back. Teach children well.

A BETTER LIFE...
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Listen to legendary
Graham Nash give
advice on How to
Create a Better
World. 

3

**The Hero to our
Four-legged Friends.**



When the floodwaters poured in, Captain Dusty Mascaro waded in and saved more than 100 pets in Hillsborough County, Florida.

In times of trouble, or even at the end of a long workday, many people turn to a familiar source of comfort: their animal companions. It's no different after a disaster — for good reason.

From the time the first wolf cub was domesticated beside the cave fire to our day — when different breeds of dogs lounge at our feet, playfully wake us in the morning, and warn us of danger — dogs and humans have created a special bond. Canines are the perfect pet: loyal, fun-loving, always happy to see us. On the farm, dogs were utilitarian. They herded sheep, stood guard against predators and kept the lonely shepherd company with conversations in yip and howl, whine and growl.

Cats were equally useful in keeping mice out of the farmhouse and feed bins. Always on the prowl, they kept troublesome pests away while still making time to provide a little companionship on the porch in the afternoon sun. Our love for these domesticated animals is as ingrained in us as the characteristics of the animals of our affections are in them.

Pets began as a privilege of the aristocracy. Noblemen and women bred dogs for hunting and lapdogs for fashion. Egyptians viewed cats as sacred and magical, even worshipping them. Today, many of us have pets simply for the companionship. They soothe us on stressful afternoons, lowering

our heart rates and brushing away loneliness as we brush their coats to grateful purrs. Some act as guide dogs or helpers for the deaf or disabled. Service dogs calm anxiety, and the family pet helps children express their emotions.

But these animals depend on us, and when hurricanes hit Hillsborough County in Florida and displaced thousands of people, many pets were stranded in the mayhem. Anxiety was high. The one thing that helps most in a crisis is knowing everyone is OK, including pets.

That's why Captain Dusty Mascaro went wading into debris-filled water to bring a little comfort to the displaced. His mantra is to make sure "no one — human or animal — is left behind." Captain Mascaro carried dogs large and small through the muddy water. Altogether, his team rescued 104 pets.

After the rescue effort, a makeshift shelter in a bus was packed with furry friends. At the end of a long couple of days, there was a wonderful reunion. Many people had lost homes and keepsakes and were facing months or even years of rebuilding their lives. But thanks to Captain Dusty, they would not be alone. Having a loyal companion to start over makes the journey a little easier.

For Captain Dusty Mascaro and his team of white knights, it was all in a day's work. They are happy to serve their community. The payoff for them can be summed up in a photograph of Captain Mascaro and a grateful rescued dog: "This dog's eyes say it all."

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4

Bee Productive.



17-year-old Gloria Barron Prize winner Anna Devolld is helping small things make a difference: Pollinators.

Anna Devolld likes creepy crawly things in the garden. And buzzing, fluttering little creatures in the air. That's because Anna is passionate about pollinators.

As a teenager, Anna worried about the little things that keep our world beautiful and our orchards producing food. Her first project was creating activity and coloring books for kids to help them understand how important pollinators are to our planet. Next, she created Pollinator Packs: plants that attract bees and other pollinators to your garden. It wasn't long before she was part of community councils encouraging the planting of pollinators in communities and roadside corridors. She now serves on her local government's environmental advisory commission.

Anna has been featured by Earth Force during its Environmental Action Civics Week, on the Disney Channel, in the Garden Club of America Bulletin and in Scholastic Magazine. You might say she's been busy as a bee.

"One out of every three bites of food we take is dependent on pollinators," Anna tells us. "Butterflies, ladybugs, hummingbirds, even bats. Sadly, every one of these creatures is declining at an alarming rate." Anna's solution is to increase habitats that attract pollinators and to educate the next generation about the importance of creating pollinator-friendly spaces.

So, the next time you take a bite out of a crisp apple or a delicious peach, or even better, enjoy your favorite fruit in a home-baked pie, think about all the little creatures that made it happen. Then think about Anna and how one teenage girl is making sure millions of pollinators are happy and productive.

We all can make a difference. As Anna says: "Find something you are passionate about, no matter how small, and see how you can change the world."

BE A LITTLE MORE...
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A full-page photograph of a female athlete with a prosthetic lower leg, captured in mid-air during a jump. She is wearing a black long-sleeved crop top and grey patterned leggings. Her prosthetic leg is a curved, blade-like design. The background shows a beach at sunset with a person on a bicycle in the distance. A red rectangular box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the number '5' and the text 'Stepping Up to Challenges.'

5

**Stepping Up
to Challenges.**

How Amy Purdy has lived a life beyond limits.

Amy Purdy lost her legs to bacterial meningitis at the age of 19. Undaunted, she went on to become a competitive snowboarder and compete in the Paralympic Games, becoming one of the most decorated Paralympic snowboarders in U.S. history. She and her husband are the founders of Adaptive Action Sports, providing programs for kids and adults with disabilities. And, after she appeared on the show “Dancing With the Stars,” she became one of the most sought-after motivational speakers in the world.

At nineteen years old, Amy's life turned upside down when she contracted meningococcal meningitis and was given less than a 2% chance of survival. She survived after losing her legs, kidney function and spleen.

After being fitted with prosthetics and receiving a kidney donated by her father, Amy continued to pursue her passions, including creating “snowboard feet” that enabled her to get back on a snowboard. These “snowboard feet,” which include wood, bolts and duct tape, have even been displayed at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

But the story doesn't end there. She became a trailblazer in the sport of para snowboard and won multiple medals in the Paralympic Games in 2014 and 2018.

Days after stepping off the podium in Sochi, Russia, she stepped onto the dance floor to compete on “Dancing With the Stars” as the first Paralympian to do so. Her creativity, determination

and her newly acquired love of dance catapulted her to the finals and showed the world what is possible when you see obstacles as opportunities.

Amy Purdy has embraced what she has learned from all her experiences and has chosen to share her story, showing others that “our real limitations are the ones we choose to believe.” She says, “When we're focused and determined enough, the possibilities are endless.”

Through adversity, Amy reinvented herself. “When I lost my legs, I had no idea what to expect. But if you ask me today if I would ever want to change my situation, I would say no. Because my legs haven't disabled me — if anything, they've enabled me. It's believing in our dreams and facing our fears head-on that allows us to live our lives beyond our limits.”

SECOND CHANCE...
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6

Arthur Brooks, the Professor of Happiness.

Being happy in this life doesn't come easy for any of us. Harvard Professor Arthur Brooks has discovered timeless ways to find fulfillment and happiness, no matter our situation.



His class on happiness has the longest waiting list in Harvard's catalog. He recently published a book with Oprah Winfrey. He is in demand on college campuses nearly everywhere.

Arthur Brooks is not a rocket scientist, a pop star or a professional athlete. Yet he gives us all what we want a little more of: happiness. He speaks to us because life is complicated, communities are stressed, families are overworked and the future seems uncertain.

Understanding what drives Brooks to make the world a happier place requires a look at his humble beginnings. He grew up in Spokane, Washington, and played the French horn.

"Music is a kind of meditation on things that are beautiful," he says. "But I wanted more."

He left the California Institute of the Arts to join the City Orchestra of Barcelona, Spain. While working full time, Brooks earned his master's degree in economics. Then, he moved back to California to work for RAND Corporation while earning his Ph.D.

Being curious is a good thing, and learning is a good thing. Curiosity gives us a better understanding of the world and our place in it. But Brooks wanted to implement what he was learning. Later, he began teaching at Georgia State University and then Syracuse University. He discovered that he was interested in the economics of behavior, or how the way people feel determines how they act, and how they act determines how they feel.

Diving into human emotions and how they motivate and shape us became Brooks' passion. He became an advisor in public policy and studied productive societies.

What he discovered was that, aside from some cultural differences, the most productive societies were also the happiest.

"Happiness isn't found in some finite checklist of goals that we can diligently complete and then coast," he says. "It's how we live our lives in the process. That's why the four pillars of happiness are faith, family, community and meaningful work."

Faith keeps us humble and teachable. When you believe there is a power greater than you, you accept corrective criticism more readily. Family often supports us when we need them and provides a place where we also teach, love and serve. Community is our broader obligation to provide for, protect and encourage others. And when we have work with a purpose, we move forward through menial tasks, knowing we are building something greater than ourselves.

Learning to be happier takes practice. Daily practices such as taking note of what we are grateful for, meditating on a higher power, connecting with family and serving in our communities make our lives match our beliefs. When we live what we believe, we do become happier. And maybe more importantly, we make those around us happier, too.

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7

**Pull Up for a
Stranger in Need.**



How the trucker community pulled off an impromptu maneuver that saved a man's life.

The road can be a lonely place. Perhaps that's why truckers have created a set of unwritten rules, a code for the road, that most live by. They are a rare community, rolling along stretches of road that course the country, fighting through snow and rain and dark of night. It's not a job you want to do alone. Luckily, they have established a community that looks after each other.

In 2018, on a stretch of freeway outside of Detroit, police received a call alerting them to a man attempting to take his life by jumping off an overpass on Interstate 696. Several law enforcement agencies and a negotiator rushed to the scene. At about 1 a.m., the freeway was blocked off, and police flagged down passing semis with an unusual plan. The tall trailers were positioned under the overpass to shorten the distance the man would fall if he did decide to jump. Thirteen trucks lined up to form a much safer platform as a landing zone.

We all have busy schedules to keep. And we all know what it's like to feel a little hopeless in the face of great life challenges—but working through those dark times is always worth it. There are brighter days ahead. Sometimes we just need a little help seeing them.

The truckers stayed in place for several hours, until negotiators could help the man see his way through the dense clouds that had overtaken him. From where he stood, feeling alone and

despondent, he saw below him a gathering of people who cared. He saw that they waited, refusing to leave until he was OK. Eventually, he backed away and was taken to a nearby hospital.

As for the truckers, the unsung heroes of the day, they did move on, a few hours late but knowing they had helped save a life.

Being anonymous suits the truckers just fine. Perhaps they realized that doing good and being good is more rewarding when we don't shift the spotlight to ourselves. In our world of "me first" and "look at me!," reconnecting with our fellow humans offers a more fulfilling way to feel good than shallow validation of the online world.

Real compassion comes from those who are there when you need them. They care about how you are doing, not just what you look like. They will pull up to catch your fall and wait for hours without saying a word, simply being there.

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8

Judging by Appearances Misses the Most Beautiful Part of Life: Friendship.



When Oliver Bromley was asked to leave a restaurant because of his facial disfigurement, he didn't seek revenge. He only asks that we all seek understanding.

In our TikTok, filtered-reality world, it's easy to get caught up in comparisons. Do I look as good as her? Are my cheekbones high enough? But these questions only narrow the lens through which we see the world. There is no divine standard by which we should all be measured.

We all look different, speak differently, think differently. Yet we all make snap judgments. Social science studies conclude that most of our first-impression character judgments are incorrect. Turns out, to really know someone takes time. It takes conversation.

Oliver Bromley has had to learn this the hard way. Due to a genetic condition called neurofibromatosis, he has many small, benign tumors on his face. One day, when he left the hospital after a series of procedures to treat neurofibromatosis, he was disheartened when a restaurant turned him away because he was scaring customers.

Oliver understands how his appearance can be disconcerting at first. But his heart is forgiving and kind. Even as the story was picked up by the BBC, charities weighed in and comments poured in from readers, Oliver remained unruffled. He hopes "some good can come from this" and that the whole incident will "create awareness around people

with facial deformities, facial differences."

Oliver's story reminds us to pause our frenetic scrolling and judging for just a moment and ask: "What is really important?" The labels we wear, both visible and internal, can imprison us in ways that limit our ability to really feel and experience life.

Friendships help us overcome loneliness and teach us to be more tolerant, more grateful. A diverse set of friends helps us be more reflective and kind. We become deeper, more thoughtful human beings when we engage with different cultures and ideas. And when we become that one friend that accepts and encourages rather than judging, the people we touch will multiply outward and return many kindnesses to us.

The famous story of Cyrano de Bergerac is one such example. Cyrano had a nose that was described as "obnoxiously large." While he could do nothing about his protuberance, he could learn to express himself. He became a poet and wrote verses that made women swoon. His friend Christian employed him to write love letters to his lady-in-waiting. It worked. The woman loved the words, believing they came from Christian. But when, alas, Christian was killed in war, the woman heard Cyrano reciting the words he had written for Christian. After this twist of fate, she realized it was Cyrano she was in love with, not Christian. She also realized the large nose didn't bother her in the least.

As we look past our own noses, beyond the imperfections of others, we will find people like Oliver. Kind. Forgiving. A privilege to have as a friend.

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9

**The Art of
Doing Good.**

How 18-year-old Gloria Barron Prize winner Austin Picinich is saving the salmon of Seattle by painting community murals.

When you have big dreams, you need a big canvas. Austin Picinich's dreams center on his home state of Washington and its dwindling salmon population.

While streams flow downhill into the ocean, salmon make their way upstream to spawn. But recent droughts, commercial development and pollution have made it difficult for salmon to make the journey. Juanita Creek was hit particularly hard, and while conservation groups were already at work, what the effort needed was more public attention. Restoring the creek would require the entire community to be aware of the issues and imagine what the creek would be like restored to its former abundant condition.

Austin went to work using his artistic talents to make a difference. He created Save Our Salmon through Art (SOSA) and then found the perfect wall in the community to house a mural bringing focus to the issue. Then he enlisted neighbors, friends and volunteers to bring it all to life.

"The thing about paint is that you can make mistakes and just paint over it," says Austin. "And then it will be perfect."

This philosophy of just working at it until you get it right is embodied in another organization Austin is working with: SalmonWatchers, led by biology professor Jeff Jensen. Like Austin's philosophy

on painting, the SalmonWatchers program takes a fresh look at the mistakes of the past and gives the streams a makeover. Teams of SalmonWatchers volunteers are building egg incubators and natural resources for salmon to thrive. But the effort is more than a few people can accomplish. And that's where Austin put his skills to work.

By creating murals — big murals — in communities where depleted streams run, Austin is raising awareness of the need for all to get involved. He begins a project by first outlining the mural and color-coding the sections. Then he organizes a community painting day, and volunteers show up, glad to be part of a project that supports bringing the salmon back.

So far, Austin's efforts have involved over 20 communities and nearly 400 volunteers and raised more than \$18,000 for stream restoration efforts. Austin smiles, clutching a handful of well-used paintbrushes: "I've learned that the power of WE can start with one person, even if that one person is just a high schooler who likes art."

As nature reclaims her place in our lives, we become more aware of the diversity of beauty around us. We are happier when surrounded by the abundance of life — and the good friends we enjoy it with.

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10

**From the NFL
to the Opera.**

When Life Changes, Change your Dreams.

Ta'u Pupu'a grew up in Tonga playing football and singing in the school choir. His massive size and athletic drive propelled him to a career with the Baltimore Ravens. When an injury ended his playing time, he switched to his other passion: opera.

The Kingdom of Tonga is the Pacific's last ruling monarchy. The pageantry and paternalism provide a rich background for a young boy. The culture, the honor in family, the respect for tradition, were not lost on Ta'u Pupu'a. Even after moving away at a young age, his heritage and cultural legacy will always be a part of him — as will the duality of the artist and the warrior.

Growing up, "I would go to choir practice every day, and then off to football practice," Pupu'a says. "I love the passion of physical competition and the passion of performance that brings people to tears."

Playing for legendary coach Bill Belichick, who initially drafted him, brought enormous expectations and prepared Pupu'a for the big stage. And he has earned accolades. After a performance in Italy, the Italian Tribune wrote: "Everyone took notice at his brilliant tone, breath-control and ravishing, powerful tenor. Ta'u Pupu'a brought reserves of stentorian power and heroic strength."

"Both football and opera take a lot of discipline," Pupu'a says. "They are both physical, and both have their moments of truth. You sack the quarterback, or you hit the notes so perfectly every member of the audience feels it in their bones."

It all comes down to having a passion for what you do, no matter what you put your talents toward. Sport and theater both capture and magnify the deepest human

emotions: love, hate, fear, tragedy, life and death, redemption.

"Each emotion has a separate energy. I want the audience to feel that energy. I want to be part of that energy in every play, every aria."

Getting to that level takes an enormous amount of practice and discipline. Habits formed on the football field helped Pupu'a make the transition to his training at Juilliard.

He was blessed with a booming voice, but that was only the beginning. Learning a piece takes time, especially if the words are in Italian or German. There are language nuances, character background stories, historical context, and bringing your own voice and personality to the role. What is too much? What needs a little more emphasis?

"It takes me three months to learn an opera," Pupu'a says. But the payback is worth it. Pupu'a loves introducing his art to children. "They come in restless, can't sit still. But the music starts, and they go silent; the reaction on their faces is priceless."

Singing opera in a venue is done without microphones. The voice has to carry all the way to the back row, touching every person as if they were the only one hearing the music.

That's the magic of the best performers. They make us feel like we are the only person alive in that moment. We experience a personal connection, the notes of a live performance resonating in our bones and the human story sweeping us up into the plot, that makes us a hero for a day.

SING YOUR SONG...
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11

53 Olympic Gold Medals.

How one athlete overcame a genetic disorder and a tragic accident to become a treasure worth more than gold.

Karissa Trinchera was born prematurely, a start that increased her odds of developing more slowly than typical children. Soon after, doctors discovered she also had Stickler Syndrome, a condition that causes vision, hearing and joint problems. She also experienced a traumatic brain injury. The bleak diagnosis was discouraging.

"They were kind of giving up on her," her mother says of the doctors.

But Karissa and her parents pushed forward. Swimming began as a sensible physical activity, but Karissa fell in love with the water. She trained harder. She made the varsity swimming team in high school, the first special education student to do so. The competition thrilled her, and she began competing in the Special Olympics. She earned 48 gold medals in her career.

And then tragedy struck again.

Karissa was in a car accident, hit by a distracted driver, severely injuring her shoulder. Surgery and rehab were difficult. With significant damage and six pins in her shoulder, doctors told Karissa that she would never compete again.

At the time, with 48 gold medals, her goal was to reach 50 medals. She pressed forward, training and preparing for more races. When she did compete again, her gold medal tally reached 53.

It was a special time for Karissa, and an emotional time for her hometown of Elk Grove, California. One of Karissa's best friends growing up was Officer Kevin Tonn. He was killed in the line of duty, and Karissa pledged her talent and her time to supporting law enforcement. Her last medal was dedicated to another officer she knew who was critically wounded. Her last act as a Special Olympics swimmer was to give back to the community she loves. She wants everyone to know of the selfless sacrifice of law enforcement officers.

After a long and successful career, Karissa moved with her parents to Idaho. But she isn't slowing down. Unable to swim competitively, Karissa has taken up a new athletic endeavor: equestrian sports. With the help of her parents, Karissa has adopted a racehorse that suffered a leg injury. It's fitting that the two work together, beating the odds and preparing for the next competition.

Win or lose, it doesn't really matter. Karissa is winning at life. Doing the most with what you have and caring for others is the real victory. Karissa's philosophy of life is to do your best and to try new things. And while plenty of people will doubt you and tell you it can't be done, a spunky girl with an infectious smile will tell you otherwise.

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12

**Slopes
and Wheels.**

From the cold wilderness of Alaska to the inner workings of the heart, Preston Pollard is helping kids rethink the way they approach life.

Preston Pollard grew up in Alaska. Not exactly a mecca for skateboarders. But Preston isn't one to follow in anyone else's footsteps.

He moved to Los Angeles after high school and became a professional skateboarder. The journey sounds like a fairytale, but it was the opposite. "I struggled with ADHD and schoolwork," Preston remembers. "I had anxiety and fears like other kids, and it could have kept me from ever achieving anything. Then I discovered one little phrase that changed my life: 'My breath is my miracle'. I changed the way I looked at things, became grateful for every breath." Preston not only made success on the ramps he also became a motivational speaker.

"Through all of my speaking engagements over the years I've realized one thing," Preston says. "Young people need mentors."

The family looks a little different in America than it did just 65 years ago. One in four children are growing up in a single family today, compared to just 9% in 1960. That puts an enormous amount of pressure on those parents. The kids end up with fewer mentors, less supervision, more time alone, more difficulty making connections and a harder time processing negative emotion.

It's unfair that so many children must deal with the feelings of loss and separation today. They need adult role models who have conquered their fears, bridled their emotions, and love life. Preston took the Zen of bending curves on slopes and defying gravity in the air to a form of meditation that teaches kids to breathe in opportunities.

They come into the program looking for an easy way out, but what these kids find is a new way to think about life. The session begins with a deep breathing exercise, a reverence for the life within. Videos of celebrities offer encouragement,

and life lessons the kids will look to. Hungry for mentors, they tune in. They then spend time in introspection, writing down goals, feelings, ways to deal with adversity based on what they have learned. And they get visits from Preston. Sometimes he arrives in person, and sometimes he appears live on screen. Twelve times throughout the year they get to hear from him. It's a huge commitment on Preston's part. "You have to make the commitment to make the change," he says. And change does happen. Attendance rates are up 45% at Preston's schools. Positive behaviors are up. Kids are getting motivated and seeing a vision of themselves they didn't see before. "Whether it's an electrician or a doctor, they start with a plan," Preston says. "I tell them if I can do it, so can they."

Preston is the mentor that has been missing in so many young lives, a rebel skater with a cause: to bring kids out of the darkness of self-isolation into the sunlight of self-acceptance. "Be yourself, and be positive," he says. Breathe in the world around you and exhale the negativity that forms when you forget how much you matter.

Preston has skated his way all over the country. He has appeared in ads for major brands like Nike, Vox, and Jones Soda. His face is on billboards in major cities and the underside of skateboard decks. He speaks to kids about the spiritual act of becoming. He is a skateboarder from Alaska. He is African American. That makes him the perfect mentor to teach kids about just being who you are, about handling the slopes that rise up in front of you and wheeling along carefree when life is good.

BE MORE OF YOURSELF...
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13

**Tolstoy and the
Power of Kindness.**



BE
KIND

“The more intelligent a person is, the more he discovers kindness in others,” Tolstoy once wrote. In all his great works that explore the indignity and misery brought upon the human race, this one truth stands out brightest in his writing.

Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist, explored the deepest workings of the human spirit. His sprawling epic, *War and Peace*, depicts the Napoleonic invasion of Russia through five aristocratic families. His words capture the sweeping scope of war and the intimate and tragic results on individuals. Interspersed in the story are philosophical reflections on human freedom, a theme he would return to in *Anna Karenina*. Tolstoy drew from his own life experiences to explore deep human emotions. His parents died when he was very young, and despite being raised in a privileged society, he grew to detest the inequalities in human conditions. After witnessing the brutalities of war, he traveled throughout Europe to observe educational methods before returning home to build schools for peasant children. He managed a large farm and a large family, and he wrote prolifically. Yet even as his reputation as a writer grew, he experienced a crisis of faith.

At the height of his fame, Tolstoy was filled with despair over

the meaninglessness of existence. He had achieved fame, wealth, and a loving family. But the sense that life was not fair gnawed at him. Intellectualism and philosophy left him feeling empty.

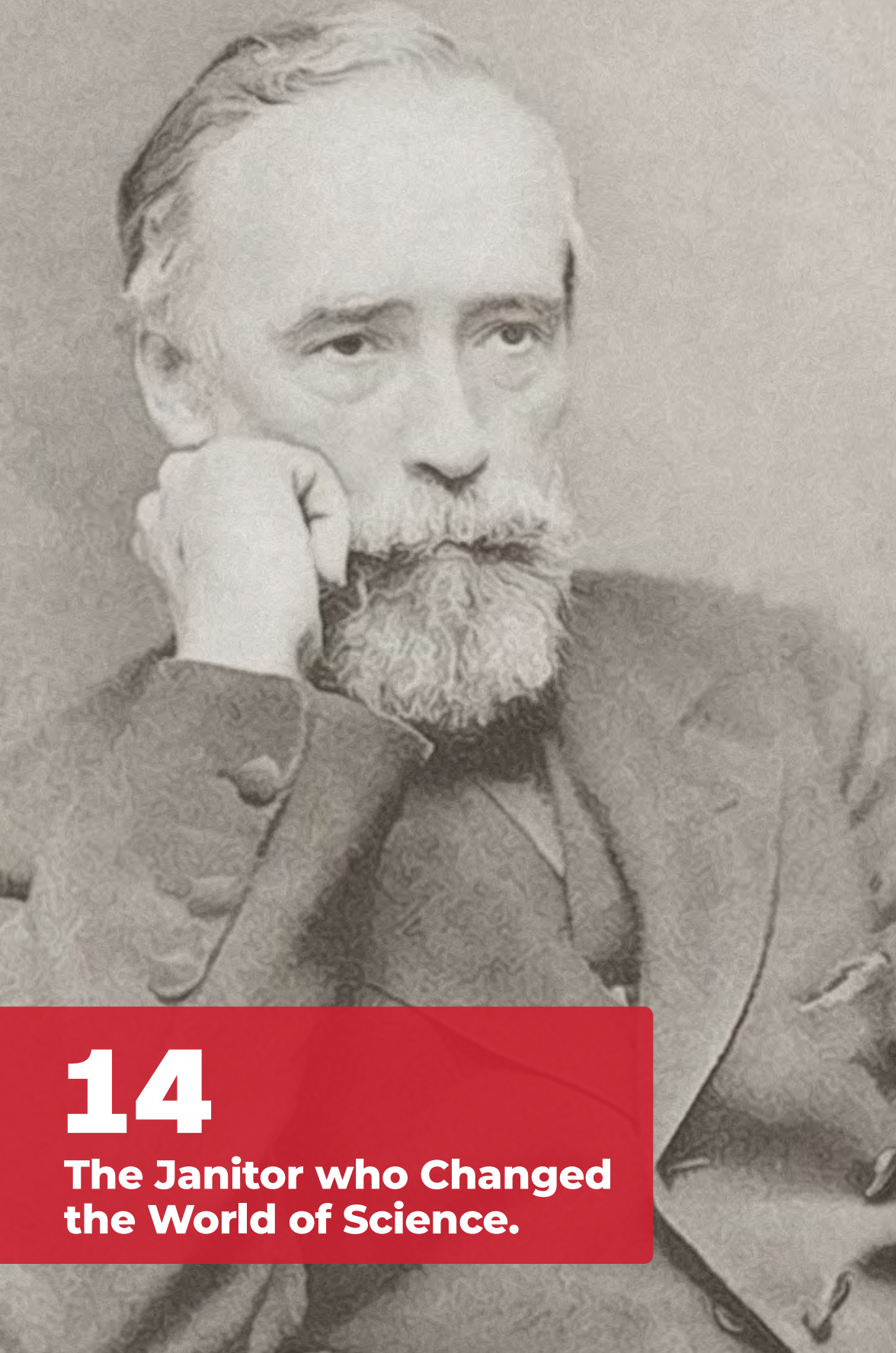
He began spending long hours away from his verdant farm, observing the local peasants. He noticed that despite their hard lives, their suffering and their lack of education, they possessed a quiet, unwavering faith. This common bond among the people gives them hope, guides the way they treat each other and helps them confront hardship and death.

At the heart of the realization that restored Tolstoy's faith is the golden rule in nearly every belief system: “Do unto others only as you would have them do unto you.” This simple spiritual guide is the foundation of happiness. All life is interconnected and deserves our compassion and kindness.

“For nothing enriches the world more than kindness. It makes mysterious things clear, difficult things easy, and dull things cheerful,” Tolstoy wrote. In all his learning, he had discovered that the most intelligent people are always those who are most kind.

BE SMART. BE KIND...
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14

**The Janitor who Changed
the World of Science.**

What would you do with your free time if you were a janitor at a university? How about becoming the inspiration for the movie “Good Will Hunting”?

James Croll was born into abject poverty in 1821. From birth, a slight deformity on the front of his skull made him the target of mocking children and adults alike. As a result, he developed a withdrawn personality that he eventually turned into an advantage — and an inspiration for us even today.

The small farm in Scotland on which he grew up required long days of labor just to subsist. He had no formal education, although his parents taught him the basics. After a series of job failures, and nearly starving to death, he took a job as a janitor at Anderson's College and Museum in Glasgow. He acquired two things with the job: enough money to live on, barely. And access to the school's library.

Croll was an avid reader, obsessive about understanding the world in which he lived. He devoured science texts, following a trail of hypotheses through the shelves, taking notes and writing down his own theories. And he did something remarkable. After 16 years of self-guided study, he wrote to the authors of scientific papers and challenged their theories. One scientist who replied was Charles Darwin. There were others.

The next step was even more audacious. Croll began submitting his theories to scientific magazines. He did leave out a few details with his signature: “James Croll,

Anderson's Institution.” While he was technically employed by the college, he was still a janitor.

When the scientific community learned of his real occupation, they were astonished. Here was a humble man, self-taught, a hermit living in the library penning letters that challenged theories, and hypothesizing himself. On learning of Croll's uncredentialed past, they could have dismissed him entirely. Instead, Darwin himself signed Croll's certificate of nomination to join the ranks of The Royal Society, a fellowship of the world's most eminent scientists.

The story of James Croll doesn't end with his finally getting recognition for his theses. And it would be a happy story if all he had achieved was finally putting food on the table and living a comfortable life. But there is more: Croll, the former janitor, introduced a breakthrough in thought concerning the causes of climate change.

Croll's paper would influence future scientists and contribute to the mathematical understanding of our solar system, the way our earth changes and how ice ages happen. The New Scientist credits Croll as “the father of climate change research.” Quite the feat for a poor farm boy who took a job as a janitor to put bread on the table and feed his curiosity at the same time.

Croll is a reminder to all of us that anything is possible if we just put our mind to it. And, as long as we have good books to read, there will be great discoveries that help us understand our world, and ourselves.

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15

How Far Can Mind and Body Take You?

101 triathlons in as many days. That's what the Iron Cowboy found out. How far can you go?

In the world of athletics, records are merely goals to be broken. In long-distance running, the marathon has long been the measure against which you pitted yourself.

The marathon made its way into athletic mythology by being the first race of the Olympics. It did, after all, take place in ancient Greece. As the story goes, when the city of Marathon was under siege by the Persians, the Athenians chose a messenger to run to Sparta for reinforcements. The distance was 26 miles and 385 yards. For hundreds of years, through almost countless Olympics, track events, city runs and competitions, the marathon held its place as the ultimate human feat — the longest human race, give or take a few brutal races like the 89-kilometer (55.3-mile) Comrades Marathon in South Africa, which began in 1921 and which only one-third of the runners finished.

Triathlons emerged in the 1970s as still another challenge, adding swimming and biking to a running race. Then, long-distance triathlons developed, often called IRONMAN® triathlons after the company that conceived them in 1978.

And then a brash young man, weary of the mundane corporate life, began training with his wife. James Lawrence is restless. His wife, Sunny, is curious and supportive. After their first marathon, Lawrence wondered just how far the human body could go. Triathlons seemed a good way to push the limits.



After 10 years of training, Lawrence accomplished what no human being had ever achieved: 50 iron-distance triathlons in 50 days in 50 states. The logistics make your head spin. The family lived in an RV for those 50 days and races, with Sunny as pilot and navigator, children as cheering section and Lawrence the automaton doing the same thing every day in a different state. Swim 2.4 miles. Bike 112 miles. Run 26.2 miles. Eat along the way. Sleep in the RV. Wake up and repeat.

“Nothing great is ever accomplished alone,” Lawrence says often. The support crew of his wife, family, community and friends has been one of his secrets to success. “We have to change our minds before we can change our bodies,” adds Lawrence, now a motivational speaker for companies like Nike, Netflix, Sports Illustrated and more.

The world of possibility within us seems to be endless. Or so Lawrence wanted to find out. So he embarked on a new challenge: 101 triathlons in 101 days. Removing travel logistics and sleeping in his own bed seemed like a good idea.

“If we remove chaos and logistics, what’s humanly possible?” Lawrence wondered. So he drew out the course that began with 90 minutes at the local aquatic center, a bike loop around the city that takes five to six hours, and finishing off the day with a marathon on a paved running trail — every day for 101 days. The daily routine required Lawrence to eat 10,000 calories daily to sustain his energy. And then there were the injuries from the constant wear and tear.

“The pain got to the point on some of the days where I would actually black out and then come back to and continue on.” As incredible as the feat is, Lawrence

credits the support of his family and community for his achievement. There were always people to ride and run with on those long days. So what did James Lawrence, the Iron Cowboy, learn through it all?

“The mind is super, super powerful. You only gain mental strength by doing something.” And Lawrence has done a few things: ridden his bike to the top of Kilimanjaro, run 235 miles across Greece, competed in a 10-day adventure race in the jungles of Fiji ... and still counting.

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YOU CAN DO...
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16

The Long Walk.

In rural Sierra Leone, where distance often stands between children and their dreams, Mustapha's journey from shoeless schoolboy to education pioneer began with a two-mile walk to school. Decades later, he's still moving forward.



As a young boy, Mustapha's father gave him a choice: The little money they had could go to a pair of shoes or to school fees. Mustapha chose school, and every day he walked two miles to class, barefoot. In the early 2000s, Sierra Leone was struggling to recover from a devastating civil war that had ended in 2002. The aftermath left the economy in shambles, with rural villages like Mustapha's lacking basic infrastructure. Despite widespread poverty, Mustapha saw education as his path to creating change in his community.

Public school was spotty. It was challenging to keep teachers in the rural areas with few resources. Mustapha wanted to learn how to make a difference, but his formal education was short-lived. No other local option existed beyond the few years of a basic education.

Then Mustapha found an online education program that offered certificates in the trades. He had to travel to a location where he could get internet and tutoring. He earned his associate's degree, then his undergraduate diploma in engineering. And he kept walking.

Mentors helped him find his way into a master's program online, and he earned an advanced degree in project management. He moved to the United States to learn more and get job experience. As soon as he felt ready, he returned to the village and got to work. The goal was always to rebuild his village. The first steps: making water available and bringing more education opportunities to people in the village, where they are.

"Without knowledge, we could not improve," Mustapha says. He is steadying a brace that bridges a well under construction. A muddy rope snakes down into a deep hole. Mustapha pulls hard on the rope and retrieves a bucket of slurry. It is a good sign. The well is almost deep enough.

"Education has to be relevant," Mustapha says, his forearms covered in drying mud. "Some regions need agrarian knowledge, others mining, still others animal science."

Creeping up on the new well are rows of maize sprouts. They will need water from the well. They will need people to tend them who know how to plant, thin, fertilize, harvest, dry, mill, package, and market the product. Students learn mathematics so they can manage inventory and prices. Still others learn how to better communicate so they can negotiate with hiring institutions to get fair contracts for the work they do.

"We focus on dynamic education based on regional needs," Mustapha says. To turn this vision into reality, Mustapha has embraced innovative solutions. To fulfill his dream of expanding access to education, students download lessons on cheap phones when access to the internet is available, sometimes for only 10 minutes a day. Mentors help guide students through the lessons, and many former students become mentors.

"I had a small spark of desire," Mustapha says. "It became first a light, then the warmth, then the power to transform lives." He has helped build over 400 wells and educate thousands of students, who in turn, are mentoring others. The impact has been so profound in Sierra Leone that the locals call his success "The Mustapha Miracle." But to Mustapha, it's no real miracle. It's about putting one foot in front of the other and never giving up. Knowledge

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17

Diamond Girls.

Nearly half of the young men in America — 16.5 million Americans — served in World War II. They left behind a lot of work to be done in fields and factories. And when families wanted to relax and enjoy a game of baseball, many of the clubs couldn't field a full team. Major League Baseball faced a shutdown during World War II. Rosters were filled with old veterans and teenagers just to keep games alive. Naturally, the level of play declined. In those tight times, who would pay hard-earned money to watch a bunch of has-beens and never-weres play what seemed like a sandlot game?

It's not that there weren't athletes capable of putting on a good game; there were. They just happened to be women.

Chicago Cubs owner Philip K. Wrigley and other baseball minds came up with a way to save the integrity of the game and make it worth watching. They created the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. These weren't just weekend bat-swingers. These were skilled athletes who had grown up playing the game in amateur softball leagues. They knew they could play ball. All they wanted was a chance to prove it.

For that first tryout in Chicago, over 200 young women showed up. Sixty were chosen to make history. Ultimately, more than 600 women played in the league.

More than just a sporting spectacle, the AAGPBL was a cultural phenomenon. These women, often scouted from their local softball diamonds, became local heroes in the 10 Midwestern cities that hosted teams. In 1948, the league reached its peak, drawing an astounding 900,000 spectators.

The Rockford Peaches emerged as the dynasty of the league, clinching an impressive four championships. Throughout the 1940s, the league's popularity soared, fueled by extensive national and local publicity. Major magazines like Time and Life featured the "swinging skirts" and impressive skills of these female ballplayers.

The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was more than just a wartime substitute; it was a testament to the talent, dedication and passion of hundreds of women who dared to play ball. They shattered stereotypes, captivated audiences and left an indelible mark on the history of American sport. Their story serves as a powerful reminder of the pioneering spirit that paved the way for the opportunities that female athletes enjoy today.

Stroll the urban parks on a Saturday afternoon, and you see ponytails bobbing underneath baseball caps. You see young girls deftly dribbling soccer balls. Tiny tots track teams lead half-pint girls on runs along the grass as well as the oval. Today, the percentage of girls who play sports is roughly equal to that of boys as they slide, kick, swing and steal their way into our American story. Proud parents couldn't be happier to fill their weekends with more games.

We have come a long way since those first few young women stepped off a Greyhound bus, wearing shorter dresses than normal for their day and carrying worn baseball gloves along with a little chip on their shoulders. Hats off to you, ladies.

GET OUT AND PLAY...
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18

Challenge, Change and Complexity: The Big 3 Cs.

The three Cs seem to make us miserable, but they ultimately lead to greater life fulfillment and happiness. Dr. Taryn Marie, a leading expert in resiliency, teaches us that the hard things in life are not to be avoided, but to be embraced for what they teach us.

CHALLENGE,
CHANGE
AND
COMPLEXITY

Dr. Taryn Marie was a determined 8-year-old. Early on, she struggled to read, but instead of letting her failing grades detour her, she allowed them to motivate her to do better. That's the first life lesson: Never let anyone else tell you that you can't do it.

Taryn resolved to ascend from the lowest reading group to the highest in her class. She studied hard every night, focusing on learning the jumble of vowels and consonants that beguiled her. Her hard work did pay off. She learned her way to the top reading group, but more importantly, she learned something about herself.

"I stayed disciplined, and I chose to believe in what was possible," Taryn reflects. "And by the end of that semester, I had achieved my goal to join our class's highest reading group. But that's actually not the end of the story. Thirty years later, I decided to get tested for a learning disability and found that I was profoundly dyslexic."

This revelation about the challenge she had to overcome in her childhood uncovered a deep truth about the determination in all of us. Some of us face incredible odds just to get through a reading class or a physical fitness test. Many times, those obstacles, like a learning disability, are invisible.

What Taryn realized is that challenges are a force that can shape all of us. That is, if we let them.

"Nobody complains about having had to learn how to walk [as an infant]," she says. "Because we know it is worth it."

Every challenge is like that. Some seem unfair, but the difficulties placed in our paths prepare us for triumphs we would not experience without confronting the mentor of challenge.

Change works the same way. It requires us to seek solutions, to find strength within ourselves to adapt. New schools, new jobs, new neighborhoods and new friends all require us to learn new ways of not only coping, but flourishing.

"Resilience is in our DNA," Taryn says. We learn it a little at a time, beginning as that toddler collapsing over and over to the floor until we get our legs to obey our desires.

As we get older, it is a little harder to see our way through the Big 3 Cs: Life gets more complex — the third C. Challenge. Change. Complexity. And what do we learn?

Resilience. "Resilience is actually the essence of being human," Taryn teaches. "So if you've ever felt like you're not good enough, remember: challenge, change and complexity are the fabric of our lives, but resilience is the essence of who we are as humans. If you're asking yourself if you can overcome your next challenge, the answer is, 'Absolutely. Yes!'"

RESILIENCE...
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19

**More Than
Just Dancing.**

How inclusion helps overcome mental illness.

JuJu loved to dance. She had a smile that filled the room and moved as if she was actually creating the music. But when she was away from her high school dance class, she was more reserved, a little bit guarded — something the group of girls in her class noticed.

JuJu's real name is Julie. She hid behind the nickname, creating a bubbly persona that concealed the pain she was experiencing at home. Her father struggled with mental illness and found his refuge in alcohol. Julie kept schoolmates at a distance but let JuJu out when the music was on.

Corrina, one of the other dance students, picked up on Julie's closed nature outside of the dance room. When she found her at lunchtime, sitting alone, earphones in, ignoring the world, Corrina sat beside her. At first, they talked about dance and music. As the conversation turned to siblings and family, JuJu steered the subject back to dance. Corrina could tell that Julie needed a friend — actually, a few. So she included Julie in the group of dance kids and started hanging out after school. Julie soon became part of Corrina's family, spending after school hours there and sometimes spending the night on weekends when she didn't have the strength to face her own family.

Slowly, trust between the two girls developed, and then a sister-like bond. One night, Julie tearfully talked about how desperate she felt at home, how her father was slowly killing himself, how she also had dark feelings that she couldn't control. She also said she felt more a part of Corrina's family than her own, that when

she was there, it was like she was floating above the darkness. With Corrina's encouragement, JuJu got professional help. She learned how to let go of what she can't control, and how to connect more deeply on an emotional level.

High school ended, college followed, marriage, kids. Julie's father did die too young. And Julie was supported by Corrina's family, the family Julie felt most comfortable in. There were many times when Julie would lean on Corrina and her parents for advice during life decisions.

Julie had two girls and a family of her own, built on the same trust and open relationships she had learned from Corrina and her parents. But when her daughter reached her teenage years, she was plagued with mental illness issues that seem to run in families, and she isolated herself.

Julie remembered how she had isolated at the same age and how a friend had taken note and taken care. So she took her daughter frequently into the wilderness for hikes, biking, skiing and long conversations. The daughter learned to trust her mother again, and she agreed to get professional help.

One day, Julie and Corrina took their two daughters hiking to the top of a nearby peak to catch the sunrise. As they sat catching their collective breath, Julie inhaled deeply, feeling the early morning sounds like music. "I love that you can always trust the sun to rise again," she said — and they all agreed.

INCLUSION...
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20

**In the Aftermath
of Disaster, Rebuild.**



Julie and Ron Lynam lost their dream home in a forest fire, so they got to work dreaming and building again

—a StoryCorps story.

The Colorado mountains elicit the peace, tranquility and sense of wonder that inspires songs. It's the perfect place to retire from a job, although perhaps not from work.

Ron and Julie Lynam worked as schoolteachers their entire careers. They shaped the lives of thousands of young people, went the extra mile to be good mentors and saved their money so that when the time came, they could enjoy more of the Colorado they had come to love. They searched extensively, looking for a place that offered them views of the pine-covered vistas, crisp morning air and a short commute to the barn to do their daily chores. They found it on a rise that overlooks two different valleys, a place where the clouds meet the peaks of the mountains.

Then, two weeks after moving in, a fire marched toward them. Julie remembers the morning: "I went out on our porch, and I saw the smoke coming over Mount Ethel, and it was billowing, that orange and purple color that you know has so much fuel in it. It almost stopped my breath."

The fire roared over the mountain, smoke darkening the skies. There wasn't much time to take anything with them. "We talked about what we would get out of the house, but I started to get panicked. At some point, I just had to say, whatever I've gotten, it's going to have to be enough."

Seeing your whole life burn up must've been devastating. The road out to safety, knowing you left everything behind. It leaves a feeling of being adrift.

"I couldn't even prove who I was after the fire," Ron recounts. "College degrees, birth certificate—all evaporated."

Julie adds: "That was maybe one of the most bizarre things, to be looking at every gift I'd ever been given in a heap of ashes. You know, the things that you own aren't just items; they're part of your story." Many people in the community never returned. It was just too painful. Starting over in a new place seems a better choice, leaving the vision of ashes behind. But Julie and Ron decided to rebuild. There was nothing left of their home but a bare foundation filled with ashes. They needed a place to sleep and live again; they needed a barn. And they needed to do it themselves. So they went to work, salvaging wood and piecing much of it together on their own.

Julie tenderly recalls how the experience also built their relationship. "The thing I've learned about you, Ron, is once you say you are going to do something, you do it. Watching you build this house, work until you were literally too tired to raise that hammer one more time. You stuck with it."

The view is back. It will take a while for the forest to grow back. But Julie and Ron are patient. And determined.

**NEVER GIVE UP
ON YOUR DREAMS...**
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21

**Teamwork
that Saves Lives.**



How a high school baseball team lifted a car off one of their classmates pinned underneath.

The magic of baseball is its fluid connection between players, each in the right position at the right time, playing their part to perfection; the flawless relay throw, the squeeze play, the three-bagger and the rally-killing cry of Tinkers to Evers to Chance on the double-play. When a team is in sync, there is nothing more breathtaking than baseball. But it takes a lot of practice to look effortless.

That's what was happening — practice — one afternoon when the Valley High School team was distracted by a scream for help. Coach Brett Sawyer heard the commotion and saw the entire team sprinting toward the parking lot, jumping over fences.

One of their schoolmates was pinned under a car that had accidentally backed over her. One of the players, Chas Roberts, remembered afterward, "You had to do what you had to do to save someone's life." The players quickly surrounded the car, each taking a hold, and lifted the car. An assistant coach was then able to pull the girl out from underneath the car. She is expected to make a full recovery.

Maybe it's the connection human beings have with each other, rushing in to help when it's needed. And maybe playing together as a team became instinctual because each knew what to do. Or maybe it's both. Maybe, deep inside, we all know that we are on the same team.

The next day, the varsity team lost their last game of the year. But winning was a little less important to them that day. The coach was proud of them for what they accomplished and said, "To be honest, we might not have the best baseball team around, but we sure do have a great group of guys."

The magic of life is the fluid connection between people: how they love, how they share, how they help. There is nothing more breathtaking than the game of life well played.

TEAMWORK...
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22

Dream Big.

How a young artist from a remote mountainous tribe came to illustrate one of the most popular books of our time: 'The Archer,' by Paulo Coelho.

"The Archer," Paulo Coelho's book of wisdom and parable of courageous living, has been translated into 88 languages in 170 countries. It has sold over 320 million copies. The spirit of the book is the story of us all, searching not only for joy in the small things, but meaning in our existence.

The story suggests that "living without a connection between action and soul cannot fulfill, that a life constricted by fear of rejection or failure is not a life worth living. Instead, one must take risks, build courage, and embrace the unexpected journey fate has to offer." It is a lesson that transcends cultures and geography. And yet, Coelho decided that each translation of the book should include illustrations that reflect the culture of the language. So, when he and his publisher were looking for an illustrator for the Chinese version, they sought images with a sense of ancient wisdom, something inspired by indigenous legends.

As this concept evolved, Tanivu Nota was living in a small village tucked away in the mountains of Alishan, Taiwan. Tanivu's creative inspiration comes from centuries of myths and dreams passed on through oral storytelling tradition. A member of the Cou (or Tsou) tribe, she grew up on the origin legends of her people, a beautiful story of

how the great maple tree shook its leaves, and as they drifted down, they became the Cou people.

Tanivu is driven to capture the history of her people in art, working in her verdant yet isolated village. But word of this kind of talent spreads quickly. Tanivu's art was shown to Irene and Corbett Wall, who were launching art and technology projects in the indigenous regions of Taiwan. They introduced the work to the Chinese Times, and the work caught the attention of Coelho's publisher.

Like the character in "The Archer," Tanivu summoned the courage to step into the light and share her talents with the world. Her first commission was on the largest stage. She threw herself into the project, inspired by the story and her heritage. She created 24 stunning illustrations that capture the details of life when you pay close attention. Color and deft strokes carry you through the story like wind and waves, the natural elements where wisdom begins. Her illustrated edition of "The Archer" was released in May 2022.

It is when we stay true to ourselves and honor where we came from that we find the pathway that leads us to our dreams. Tanivu now dreams of traveling the world and meeting new friends. As her art precedes her in this journey, she will find that dream fulfilled.

DREAM BIG...
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23

**The Friendship Heard
Round the World.**

Luz Long and Jesse Owens struck up a friendship at the 1936 Olympics that transcended sport, race and history.

Jesse Owens was the grandson of enslaved people and the son of Alabama sharecroppers. Luz Long studied law at the University of Leipzig and was the physical embodiment of Hitler's nationalistic ideal. One would become a national hero. One would die in the upcoming war. Both would call out racism at a time when it could cost them everything.

Owens arrived in Berlin in 1936, torn between boycotting the Olympics on moral principles or competing in hopes the attention would further the cause of Black acceptance. Long arrived at the Olympics disenfranchised by the Nazi regime and desperate to expose the fallacy of the idea of a superior Aryan race.

The two men met at the broad jump, where Owens had inadvertently scratched his first jump, unaware it would be recorded as his first attempt, and not a trial. Unsettled, he scratched the second jump. As the story goes, Long suggested that Owens leap before the mark, ensuring that Owens would qualify to move on. In the spirit of competition, Long wanted the best from his opponent.

Owens did qualify, and the two went on to the finals. Long would beat the European record. But Owens would set a new world record that outdistanced Long. The two would best each other and the record five times before Owens finally won. What happened next is not the stuff of movie scripts but of real life.

Long took hold of Owens, and the two strode arm-in-arm for a victory lap. The crowd roared approval and shouted, "Owens! Owens!" Hitler promptly left the arena.

The friendship between the two broad jumpers would continue for years until Long stopped writing his friend in 1943. He had been conscripted into the German military and mortally wounded in the Battle of St. Pietro. He passed away in a British military hospital, but not before penning a letter to his dear friend.

"Someday, find my son," he wrote Owens. "Tell him what times were like when we were not separated by war. Tell him how things can be between men on this earth."

Owens honored the request and corresponded with the younger Luz for years. After the war, Owens returned to Berlin to walk arm-in-arm with Kai Long, the son of the great peacemaker and forever friend, remembering the moment in the stadium.

"It took a lot of courage for him to befriend me in front of Hitler," Owens recalled. "I would melt down all the medals and cups I have, and they wouldn't be a plating on the twenty-four-carat friendship that I felt for Luz Long."

Friendship is the bond that gets us through the trials of childhood and the loneliness of our adult lives and can remind us of our shared humanity. Friendships forged in the furnace of war and inhumanity lift us all.

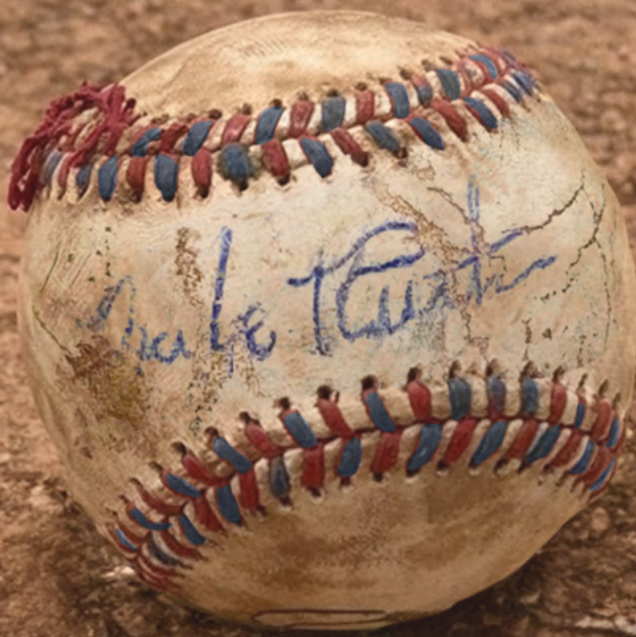
**THE POWER
OF FRIENDSHIP...**
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24

The Most Recognizable Voice in the World.

James Earl Jones put away the villainous Darth Vader to enjoy a character more like his real self: the kind Mr. Mertle in Sandlot.



The young James Earl Jones suffered from a debilitating stutter. Shy and self-conscious, young James was encouraged to try theater as a way to overcome it. Perhaps the teacher saw his future potential, but more likely, she saw a boy who needed a little confidence.

Jones worked hard as an actor, and the theater enhanced his social skills and ability to communicate. It even gave him a sense of direction. But he put it on hold to join the military. With a sense of duty to his country, he became a ranger and instructor in cold-weather and mountain training, achieving the rank of lieutenant.

He then returned to New York and began a prolific stage and film career. He was one of a handful of actors to win Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony awards, an accomplishment known as the EGOT. He received the National Medal of Arts and was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame.

Of all his brilliant work on stage and screen, James Earl Jones is most remembered for his role as Darth Vader, the father-gone-bad villain who destroys worlds and is finally overcome by his own son. The battle for good over evil in “Star Wars” reflects a universal experience in all our lives. It reminds us of the power one individual can wield when motivated by the virtues of love, forgiveness, honor and fairness for all. James Earl Jones reveled in the role, seeing the villainy as a warning to audiences. Stories of good and bad help form our young selves, help us see the consequences of bad decisions and the triumph of good ones.

When the icon of multiple generations showed up on the tiny set of “Sandlot,” the young actors were understandably in awe and intimidated. Patrick Renna, who

played Ham, remembers that day well.

“He’s larger than life, and he’s famous — James Earl Jones. We’re all, like, speechless, and he was so cool.”

A huge “Star Wars” fan, Renna remembers that when he got the opportunity to meet Jones, “None of us had the guts to talk to him. Marty York goes up to him and goes, ‘Sir, I hear you’re James Earl Jones. You were Darth Vader in “Star Wars”?’ And he looked at him and said, ‘No. I am your father!’”

The moment was magical for the boys. And when the time came for his scene with them, they got to see the character Jones most embodied: Mr. Mertle. He was kind; his face lit up when talking to them. He loved sharing baseball with them in that sacred father-son rite. Perhaps, on that sunny afternoon when nostalgic boyhoods were being replayed, Jones was remembering his own childhood, back when he was a shuffling, self-conscious pre-teenager looking for a safe place to gather a little courage and receive a few kind words from a mentor, a handful of encouragement that can fill your sails and take you to places far beyond the universe you live in.

Of all the recognizable voices out there, the ones we should listen to are those away from the microphone, off-screen, whispering that we can be more. These are the same voices we should raise ourselves.

LIFT YOUR VOICE...
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25

**Don't Let a Bad Day Trick
You Into Believing You
Have a Bad Life.**

Allie Newman not only survived cancer but also helps hospitals better meet the needs of teenage cancer patients.

A cancer diagnosis can bring you to the very edge of the cliff. It did for Allie Newman. A bright, athletic 16-year-old one day and a cancer patient the next.

Osteosarcoma isn't a word that should ever be in a high schooler's vocabulary. Allie got very familiar with it. It's a degenerative bone cancer that requires aggressive chemotherapy. She endured 12 months of treatment, losing her hair, her strength and her appetite but never her positive outlook.

Then came the surgeries to replace her hip, her femur, her knee. On top of those were 10 maintenance surgeries. Allie became very familiar with hospitals. The endless trauma can take a toll, rob a person of optimism.

So when Allie found herself on the cliff edge, she had already made up her mind the first day she got her diagnosis. She had decided that she would live and love life, no matter what it brought. Yes, it was hard. But Allie also discovered new friends and the courage to finish college, to travel abroad, to sing at the top of her lungs, celebrate every new year of being cancer free and, yes, jump off literal cliffs. She jumped and screamed all the way down into the cool water. Her head bobbed to the surface, and she wanted to do it all again.

As Allie has realized, life is an opportunity not only to see what we're made of but to help others see what

they are made of. "Cancer changes people," she says. "It sculpts us into someone who understands more deeply, hurts more often, appreciates more quickly, hopes more desperately, loves more deeply and lives more passionately."

With that passion, Allie joined Teen Cancer America, an organization founded by rockers Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend that helps hospitals treat teenage cancer patients. Most hospitals don't have special programs or facilities for 13- to 24-year-olds. Yet youth-focused programs and facilities help teenage patients better understand procedures, recover faster and have an overall better hospital experience. To date, Teen Cancer America has positively impacted 18,000 families by consulting with 97 hospitals and partnering with 30 to award grants.

You never know where your life will lead, what courage and determination you will have to summon. But when you are facing your fears, do as Allie says: "Take a second to smile, and give yourself a minute to truly reflect on all the good in your life right now." And, if you are so inclined, jump off a cliff into the ocean, screaming for joy that you are here, that you are alive, that you can still love.

RESILIENCE...
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Hear Allie Newman's incredible story of resiliency. 

The Foundation for a Better Life® is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote positive values. The TV PSAs, billboards and other media provide inspiring and uplifting messages seen in over 195 countries. The examples of individuals living values-based lives motivates people to bring out the best in themselves. We believe these messages are making a difference in the world.

We do not participate in fundraising and have no political or religious agenda. This global effort is built on the belief that people are basically good and appreciate uplifting reminders, encouraging them to do the right thing. Developing positive values and passing them on to others is The Foundation for a Better Life.



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