

Who you meet on a bus

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Cameron and I often have very spirited phone conversations. At lunchtime on Friday, he called and was very excited.

This past week, he had met a woman on the bus he takes to Owens Community College. She was surrounded by bookbags. He isn't one to sit quietly and ride, so he struck up a conversation by saying, "Gees, I'd hate to see your book bill."

She turned to him and said, "No, these aren't my books. This is everything I own. I live in the women's shelter and if I leave this stuff there, someone will steal it."

Cameron has been through a lot and at the tender age of 26, he understands more than many will after a lifetime of experiences. He immediately said that if she was willing to share, he wanted to know how she ended up in the shelter.

She had finally told her father she was a lesbian and she had been in the shelter with her bags of worldly goods ever since. She left for school before the shelter served breakfast and often returned after dinner was long gone. She sometimes didn't eat for days.

She went on to say that several months ago she had lost her student ID and could no longer ride the bus for free so she had walked from downtown Toledo to the campus with her possessions in tow. Someone had directed her to Catholic Charities, which funded her replacement ID so she could ride the bus.

Cameron was impressed with her resolve and tenacity. She truly wanted to succeed and was doing it any way possible. Instead of going to class and worrying about what he needed or wanted, he immediately went to the student union and transferred money from his account to one in her name. It wasn't much but he knew he would never be able to get her off his mind if he didn't help in some way. He wanted to make a difference in her life, if just temporary, and the chance encounter definitely made a difference in his.

This is a touching story even if it had ended there — but it didn't. When Cameron got home that day, he wrote a letter explaining his bus companion's situation and the next morning, he emailed it to a dozen college deans in Ohio and Michigan. In just a short couple of hours, he received hundreds of reply emails. Apparently the deans had read it and passed it on and all these people emailed Cameron wanting to know how he thought they could help students like this; students who are committed to bettering themselves enough to overcome obstacles that

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might seem insurmountable to many.

Cameron made my pride-filled heart nearly burst from my chest. How awesome it is to have a child who cares so deeply for others; who wants to make a difference; who will not sit by and let something they feel is unjust or unfair go on.

How good it makes me feel my kid is concerned about humankind — not his kind or your kind or my kind.