

Welcome Home

Heartwarming stories of lost pets being rescued are a relief in the daily mix of reported news.

The Bible records a “lost animal returns home” story. But it’s not merely a feel-good tale. It is a story of life and death, and it touches the entire human race.

Through the words of a parable, Jesus took his listeners to a hillside with a shepherd and his flock of 100 sheep. One night, a lone sheep strayed from the flock and became lost, easy prey for predators. When the shepherd realized he was missing an animal, he left the 99 other sheep in a safe place and began to search. Finally, he found the wanderer and brought it home (Matthew 18:12-13 and Luke 15:4-7).

“In the same way,” Jesus said, with a child beside him, “it is not my heavenly Father’s will that even one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14). God is supremely concerned about the eternal safety and well-being of every individual person. He lovingly reaches down to you and to me.

In describing his own mission to earth, Jesus used this striking language:

“The Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost” (Luke 19:10).

The truth is we are all lost and separated from God because of our sin. But God had a great rescue plan—Jesus Christ’s death on the cross was to redeem us and restore our relationship with God. Isaiah 56:3 uses the same sheep motif. “All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.”

“But God had a great rescue plan—Jesus Christ . . .”

If you want to become a member of God’s family, you must acknowledge that you are lost and facing spiritual death—separated from God and unable to find your way. Then, you must rely entirely upon Jesus Christ, God’s Son, for your rescue. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God’s Son does not have life” (1 John 5:12).

Don’t ignore “this marvelous gift of God’s kindness” (2 Corinthians 6:1). When you put your trust in him, God doesn’t hesitate. “The ‘right time’ is now. Today is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). My child, welcome home!

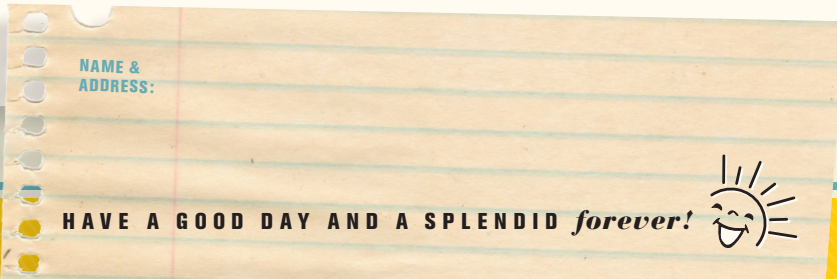
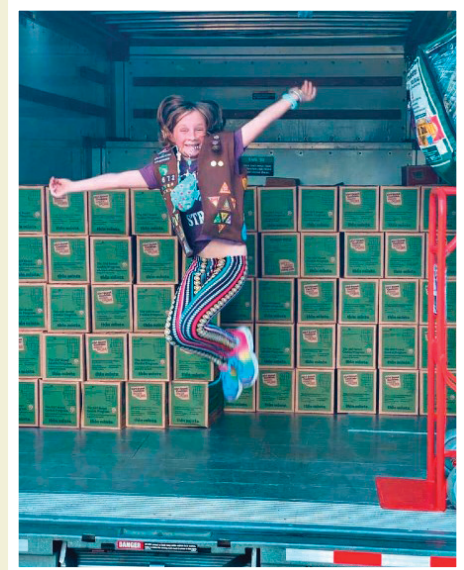
[Jim Kraus]



|| AUGUST 2021 ||

Sweet Success

Eight-year-old Lilly Bumpus of San Bernardino, California, loves challenges. Not just ordinary challenges, but ones that defy the odds. It’s something she’s been doing all her life. Lilly was born with Ewing sarcoma, a rare bone cancer. At 3 months old, Lilly began a grueling regimen of fourteen rounds of treatments that were completed before she turned one. The result? She’s cancer-free. The little girl who beat cancer joined the Girl Scouts of America when she was 5 and took on another challenge: cookie sales. She sold 5,000 boxes of cookies in a week, earning a trip to Greece and Rome. This year, Lilly and her troop members (some who also are cancer survivors or whose families have been affected by the disease) upped the game. They decided to allocate the majority of their total sales to pediatric cancer research and the homeless. Lilly’s personal goal started at 5,000, then increased to 20,000. Her mom, Trish Bauer, thought reaching that number would take a miracle, especially in a not-quite-over pandemic year. But Lilly was determined—setting up a booth outside her house, taking online orders, and making deliveries before and after school. When the final tally was revealed, Lilly Bumpus set a record for her local GSA council with 32,484 boxes sold in 57 days, with 5,200 of them earmarked for hospitalized cancer “warriors.”



Big Celebrities' New Home

They epitomized “The Greatest Show on Earth” by their size alone. When the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus stopped featuring elephant acts in 2016, the elephants were moved to the Ringling Brothers 200-acre Center for Elephant Conservation in Polk City, Florida. But this year, 30 of the circus elephants were transferred permanently to a 2,500-acre custom-made habitat at White Oak Conservation Center near Jacksonville. Not only are the surroundings new, but so is the



concept of a herd to the female elephants, ranging in age from 8 to 38. Here's to a long and happy retirement, ladies.

Spontaneous Generosity

NBA legend and sports broadcaster Shaquille O'Neal has a mission each day whenever he leaves the house: to do a good deed.

Even though he's highly recognizable, he plays it cool, taking people by surprise. That's what happened when O'Neal was shopping in a Zales jewelry store in April. As the basketball great was perusing, a young man at the counter was asking what he owed on an engagement ring. Shaq overheard and offered to pay the balance. The recipient was reluctant to accept O'Neal's gift but was assured, “I do it all the time.” Not for the attention and accolades—just Shaq making someone's day.



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Blank Canvases

Fact: bananas bruise. And when you're shopping, you pick unblemished ones. So does Anna Chojnicka from London, England . . . with the full intention of bruising each peel and creating an artistic masterpiece.

It started in March 2020 when she got ill and self-isolated. To keep from going crazy, Chojnicka revived her dormant artistic training with a banana and a seam ripper to “draw.” She



uses no pencils, pens, or ink—time and oxidation do the rest. By the end of April 2021, the “banana_bruiser” had posted more than 400 pieces on Instagram. And after the art is preserved digitally, Chojnicka enjoys a healthy snack.

Pristine View

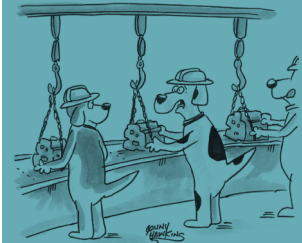
In the 2020 spring climbing season, Mount Everest was majestic from afar. The world's highest peak was closed to tourists and expeditions. It wasn't good for the Nepalese economy since they depend on the three months of concentrated revenue, but it was good for the mountain. A dozen Sherpas became a cleanup crew, removing 2.2 tons of garbage left behind. Nature rejuvenated in the pristine



environment. This year, more than 300 mountaineering permits were issued by Nepal with some basic coronavirus safety measures in place. In addition to the \$11,000 permit, many foreign climbers bought extra insurance for good measure.



“I'd like to lose a little blubber.”



“They work us like dogs, and the rollover rate is really high.”

An onion can make you cry, but is there a vegetable that can make you laugh?

“Courage is found in unlikely places.” —J. R. R. Tolkien

Babies are such a nice way to start people.