



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Thanks for Caring for Kids!

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It is difficult to see the best in others when we hear the news about angry people who only acknowledge the worst in youngsters and families in their community. Recently I have personally experienced some comforting and powerful stories of simple ways people I know reach out with love and caring in support of families and children! **Here are three real stories of caring people I know, who have touched my life in the last few weeks. I hope they inspire you too!**

Late one night a volunteer youth worker called me to ask for advice. Sixteen year old Maria had just posted a couple of worrisome messages on her Facebook page. They weren't threatening in a direct way, but mentioned that sometimes Maria feels very happy but alternately very low and sad. The next day she posted wondering if anyone would notice if she jumped off a bridge. The volunteer does not work directly with Maria, but sees her posts and knew to ask for advice. It was easy to come up with a plan, including posts that offer support and personal interest. A few of the youth involved also offered interest and concern posting that Maria would be missed. More wise and confidential steps are being taken to help offer solace and protection in response to obvious troubles in Maria's life. Maria's parents needed information, and a suggestion that they monitor what their youngsters post. But what struck me, was the careful way in which the volunteer handled what could be a very risky situation. She took time, effort and offered wisdom and strength to a teen and her family, looking out for their safety. She went out of her way to show consideration for all, and even arranged for the local mental health association to offer outreach to parents and children regarding the signs of depression and suicidal thoughts that indicate trouble ahead.

I am grateful for volunteers and community helpers like her who care deeply for others!

Officer Tony Hines does a lot of work in the community through his job on the police force, and he offers so much more. Recently he and his colleagues were attending a law enforcement meeting in Orlando. During their stay, Trayvon Martin was killed. Tony changed his plans to return home to Ohio, in order to offer support to all parties involved in the Trayvon case. He realized the incredibly tenuous situation, the complications of the case, and the pressure on everyone to deal with it carefully. Tony offered to help, knowing that respect and consideration of all parties, was required. He so impressed the people involved that they invited him to return and participate in the memorial service. Tony's skills and experience are a wonderful influence on those involved as they seek to deal with the complexities of the case and help the community to heal. **I am proud to know an officer like Tony Hines and glad he works for us!**

Seth is seventeen. The day of the Junior/Senior Banquet at his school, he went skateboarding with a friend. When his friend looked back at Seth, he lay unconscious on the street. Seth had brain surgery that day and was in an induced coma for two weeks. His family, friends, and the whole community held vigils, prayed and shared information. Within the first 24 hours a CareCalendar site was set up so people can bring meals and help to the family. An update blog was created, and by this week 2000 people were reading it! Seth is awake and even speaking a little. The road to recovery will be long.

I am so proud to know that many people are surrounding Seth and his family with incredible care!

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