

# At Stan the Man's bookmobile, kids buy books with acts of kindness

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Stan Tucker (left) talks to grade-schooler Jaxon Styles in Marietta, Georgia, on September 21, 2020, for a video about Jaxon's winning entry in a book-publishing competition. Photo: Patrik Jonsson/The Christian Science Monitor

On the Leap for Literacy bookmobile, kids can get a free book. However, they have to do something kind first.

Stan Tucker started the bookmobile, called the Read 'n' Roll.

Kind acts are recorded on kindness tickets, which are like money on the bookmobile.

When the bookmobile shows up at a school, the kids jump into a line to exchange their tickets for books.

Kindness tickets can be for simple acts. A ticket might say, "I helped a student that dropped his books."

Tucker was teaching kindergarten in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2014. A student told him he wouldn't be going to a book fair because his mom didn't have any money. It broke Tucker's heart, and it gave him an idea for a way to get books to kids.

Now working as a waiter and camp counselor, Tucker started his program during a year off from teaching in 2015. Sometimes he was hauling more than 1,000 books in a car for giveaways at schools.

To build the program, Tucker knew he needed something to count. He started counting acts of kindness.

The quickest result when you do something kind for someone "is that smile that comes on their face," said Tucker.

### **A Rising Tide Of Kindness**

Over the past five years, Leap for Literacy has grown. He now gives away 2,500 books a year. More than 13,000 students have traded kindness tickets for books. In summer 2020, a new writing program began.

Tucker, who loved books as a kid, said it seemed impossible to make his dream work on a waiter's pay. However, he added, "at every turn, something has happened to keep this going."

For example, he met country singer Zac Brown, an Atlanta native, who came into the restaurant where Tucker worked. Tucker asked Brown's five kids about school.

Brown liked the way Tucker interacted with his family. He was starting a summer camp and offered Tucker a camp counselor job and an old tour bus for a bookmobile.

Other donations have come in. He used them to expand his program. Five hundred kids participated in a writing program in which they received blank books to write in. A few of the books they wrote were chosen by the Leap for Literacy board to be printed. Tucker hopes to one day fill the bookmobile with those books.

### **"It's Cool To Be Kind"**

His next goal is to make the programs national and even global. He wants to give away even more books. He'd like to reach 1 million acts of kindness.

"What Stan is doing is amazing," said Quenecia Styles-Smith, whose son, Jaxon, was in the writing program. It's one thing to scold a child for behaving badly, she said, but "it's another to notice when a child holds a door for someone."

It's not all about the reward for being kind, said Styles-Smith. He talks about "how it's cool to be kind to other people, and that's important."

Some studies suggest that doing something nice while expecting something for it might not get the best results. However, some who study kindness say behavior modeling is a way to fight bullying.

Tucker's effort is part of a shift in education and parenting, said John-Tyler Binfet, a professor at the University of British Columbia in Canada. He has studied kindness and its effects.

Celebrating good behavior, said Binfet, "changes the climate."

### **The Birth Of "Stan The Man"**

Tucker's full name is Stanley Thomas Tucker Jr. He was named after his father, who was killed in a car crash when the younger Tucker was 8 years old.

In his book, "Stan and the Man," Tucker talks about his father. He wrote, "I hope that he is proud of the man that I am."

That sincere depth moves children, said Styles-Smith. Her son Jaxon has noticed.

"Stan teaches me how to be kind, especially when no one else is watching," said Jaxon. "It's important to be kind because other people, if you are kind to them, they will be kind back."

## Quiz

- 1 What is the relationship between books and kindness tickets?
- (A) Kids are encouraged to share books to complete acts of kindness.
  - (B) Students can complete kindness tickets and trade them in for books.
  - (C) With enough kindness tickets, kids can get their books published.
  - (D) Zac Brown donated the bookmobile because of Stan Tucker's kindness.
- 2 Why did Quenecia Styles-Smith feel grateful after her son took part in the writing program?
- (A) She thought her son learned valuable lessons from Stan Tucker.
  - (B) She learned how to continue encouraging her son's writing.
  - (C) She noticed that her son was interested in studying kindness.
  - (D) She found out Zac Brown had made a large donation to the program.

- 3 Read the following paragraph from the section "It's Cool To Be Kind."

*"What Stan is doing is amazing," said Quenecia Styles-Smith, whose son, Jaxon, was in the writing program. It's one thing to scold a child for behaving badly, she said, but "it's another to notice when a child holds a door for someone."*

Which word or phrase from the paragraph helps the reader to understand the meaning of "scold"?

- (A) amazing
- (B) writing program
- (C) behaving badly
- (D) notice

- 4 Read the following sentence from the section "It's Cool To Be Kind."

*Tucker's effort is part of a shift in education and parenting, said John-Tyler Binfet, a professor at the University of British Columbia in Canada.*

Which answer choice uses the word "shift" in the SAME way as the sentence above?

- (A) The new nurse is working an overnight shift at the hospital.
- (B) Lifting free weights is a shift in her normal training program.
- (C) We saw the cats run quickly and then suddenly shift direction.
- (D) Ben wanted to try to shift the blame for the lost dog onto his neighbor.

## Answer Key

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