



Paying It Forward From Pittsburgh to Chicago

Around the beginning of April, the man from Pittsburgh (who wishes to remain anonymous) picked Chicago at random and posted a message on the Internet site Craigslist offering to help anyone in Chicago on the weekend of April 4-5. He wrote that he could assist with such things as groceries, giving a ride, or helping with house or yard work. The only thing he wanted in return was for the person helped to pay it forward by aiding someone in the future. After sifting through the replies, the man decided he could help four of the respondents, all of them strangers.



Armed with tools, a video camera, and some clothing he was planning to give to one of the parties needing help, the man made the long trek to Chicago. During the trip he received an e-mail on his cellphone from one more person requesting assistance; this brought his mission total to five. [In an April 16 story](#), the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* quoted the Good Samaritan as saying that he knew he was “taking a big risk” traveling to another city to meet complete strangers, yet he didn’t let fear deter him.

His first mission on Saturday was to deliver an automobile battery to a man whose van needed a new one. Mission number two also involved a vehicle: a man had bought a truck on, of all places, Craigslist and needed a ride to Des Plaines, Illinois, to pick it up. The last mission on Saturday — the one received via cellphone — was to help someone remodel a bathroom, which included the twist that the remodeler was himself doing the work to help a friend.

Sunday began with mission number four: tearing down an old wooden swing set in a woman’s yard. At this point the Pittsburgh Samaritan ended on the receiving end of one of his own pay-it-forward efforts: the man who had needed the ride to his recently purchased truck showed up to assist with dismantling the swing set. Mission number five brought the altruistic odyssey to completion as the Good Samaritan donated the aforementioned clothing to the Chicago Homeless Sandwich Run, which delivers food, clothing, and personal items to over 800 homeless people every Sunday.

The day concluded with the long journey back to Pittsburgh, putting a grand total of 1,176 miles on the Samaritan’s car. Afterward, he posted [a video of his adventure](#) on the YouTube website under the user name “friendinpittsburgh” and the title “Pay It Forward — Pittsburgh to Chicago — Random Acts of Kindness.” It has since gathered over 5,000 views, and the man from Pittsburgh told the *Post-Gazette* he is very happy with how it all turned out. “Positive energy rubs off on other people. I figured if I posted something and got a couple of hits on YouTube then other people would do good things, pay it forward, and there would be a chain-reaction. I didn’t expect anything to this extent.”

The extent of the Pittsburgh Samaritan’s influence can be seen in the comments left by his YouTube viewers. A viewer known as missmandie78 wrote: “What a wonderful start to my day to sit here and watch someone truly making a difference in the world!... Thanks for helping inspire those around you.” And jswnrsk posted this comment: “I shared the *Post-Gazette* article with my students today and just



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on June 26, 2009

finished watching your video.... Bless you! You've given me hope again."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nd8m1Kqgbjg>

The man who received the ride to his truck and returned the favor by helping with the swing set reiterated the theme that a good deed goes a long way. He told the *Post-Gazette*: " I went through a long period where I kind of just lost faith in humanity, a long span of thinking it was a dog-eat-dog world and people aren't considerate of their fellow man. And then you run into a guy like this and it just restores all the faith you ever thought you lost in humanity."



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