

Acts of real kindness are not for the faint of heart or mind

Life's Outtakes



Daris Howard

Isaac's family had been brutally murdered by the Germans, and he had joined the war with revenge being his only desire. But after Berlin fell to the Allies, he found some compassion for a starving four-year-old German girl who tried to steal food from him. The old lady at the bombed out building where the little girl lived told him the girl's name was Alexandra, and that her family had all been killed. The old lady suggested he take the little girl as his own, saying otherwise she would likely die.

At first Isaac balked at the idea of raising a child of the enemy who had killed his family. But he realized he needed Alexandra as much as she needed him, and that she was innocent of the atrocities that the war had created around her.

Because the old lady spoke little French, and he spoke little German, communicating was hard. Eventually he was able to get her to understand that he wanted her to ask Alexandra if she would like to be his daughter. When she did, Alexandra pointed at him and then to her own mouth, and he understood that she was asking if he would feed her. He smiled and nodded. She ran to him and threw her arms around his waist, and he realized how much she had grown to trust him. In return, he

felt an almost imperceptible warm feeling of love in his heart that was starting to burn away the stone cold hate.

He took Alexandra back to his camp. He didn't know how he was going to manage getting her back to France, but he knew he was not going to leave her behind. He had her stay at his tent, and he approached his commanding officer.

"Captain, I have a request."
"Yes, Sergeant, what is it?"
"There is a little, four-year-old girl that . . ."

The captain didn't even let him finish. "Is this the one that you have been sharing your food with?"

Isaac was surprised. "You've seen her?"

The captain nodded. "Not only that, but I saw you protect her from the men who planned to harm her today. I was surprised that you, of all people, could feel any kindness for a German."

"She's just a child, Sir. I took her back to her home, but found out she has no family. An old lady there said she would likely die if no one looks after her. I would like that chance."

The captain spoke sternly. "I find that surprising. You, of all people, with your hatred from the loss of your family. I thought you could never find forgiveness. And just how do you plan to get her back to your home in France?"

"I was hoping you could provide some written order for her to be able to board the train with me," Isaac replied. "If not, I will walk the whole way, if I have to, in order to take her."

The captain was silent for a

moment. Finally, he nodded. "You know, as I see it, everyone in her immediate family is dead, and you are just escorting her to find other distant family members."

"But she doesn't have any other . . ."

The captain held up his hand. "Are you not planning to be her family? And do you not live a distance away?"

Isaac suddenly understood

and smiled. "Yes, Sir."

"I will have the company clerk draw up the papers for you to be her escort," the captain said, "along with your official release papers."

"Thank you, sir," Isaac replied.

"I can help you with the military clearance," the captain said. "But I cannot authorize any extra food. I'm afraid you will have to do whatever you can for

that."

"I will continue to share my rations with her, Sir."

"That is hardly enough for one, let alone two."

"We'll make do."

And with that, Isaac prepared willingly to face what would likely be a challenging journey, but he did so with a renewed purpose, and a small feeling of love beginning to grow in his heart.

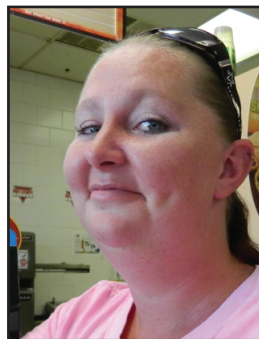
What do you think should be done with the influx of immigrant children coming into the United States?



Jessica Pettingill Shelley
"The kids I am fine with, it's the drug dealers I am having a hard time with."



Laurie Skinner Shelley
"We need to take care of our own first."



Christine Cardona Shelley
"We can't take care of children in adoption centers and foster care, how do we take care of immigrants?"



Jessica Cline Shelley
"Send them home; we can't take care of our own."

F-H Fair events fill the week at EIS fairgrounds

•The 4-H Demonstration Contest is July 31 beginning at 9 a.m. at the Extension Office, 583 W. Sexton in Blackfoot.

•The Bingham County 4-H Style Revue is at the Eastern Idaho State Fairgrounds' Needlecraft Building July 31 at 5 p.m.

•The 4-H Horse Show is Friday at the Eastern Idaho State Fairgrounds beginning at 8:30 a.m. in the arena.

•Market lamb, meat goat and rabbit weigh-ins are at 7:30 a.m. Aug. 4. The rabbit show is at 8 a.m., the meat goat show is at noon and the sheep show is at 4:30 p.m.

•Aug. 5 is the swine show at

8 a.m., the dairy goat show at 8:30 a.m., dairy cattle show and Cattle Kids at 1 p.m. and the beef show at 5 p.m. Thursday is also a table-setting contest in the Needlecraft Building at 9 a.m. for Intermediates and Seniors; for Junior 2 at 9:15 a.m. and Junior 1 at 9:30 a.m. A consumer decision-making contest is at 1:30 p.m.

•Aug. 6 is the meat animal judging contest at 9:15 a.m., the round-robin contest at 1 p.m., the Buyers' Barbecue at 4:30 p.m. and the Annual Market Animal Sale at 6:30 p.m.

Fixing education's "Big Data" problem

BY JASON LANGE
Guest opinion

Every year, American public schools spend \$2.2 billion replacing teachers who drop out of the profession.

But the true cost to the system is even bigger. When teachers stick with their jobs, they build up valuable experience and improve their instructional techniques. When they leave, that valuable experience vanishes. Administrators have to expend time and money — both usually in short supply — training replacements.

Retaining teachers, therefore, could save billions and improve education quality.

Fortunately, preserving the intel experienced teachers have isn't that difficult. It's as simple as mimicking the stat geeks who are revolutionizing baseball and the political operatives who are winning elections.

They're harnessing the power of data. And they're succeeding.

For the first time ever, schools have detailed information on the strengths and weaknesses of individual educators — and the computing power to analyze it. They can also track student performance, rates of learning growth, demographic trends, even the effectiveness of various teaching methods across subjects.

Used correctly, such information could fuel teachers' professional development, empowering them to cultivate their craft and get the most from their students.

Unfortunately, that's not how many school officials are using this invaluable data.

Forty-one states require regular teacher assessments. In most cases, administrators collect data on teacher performance, offer detailed descriptions of their deficiencies — and yet do little to help them improve.

Instead, schools pack their teachers into one-size-fits-all "professional development" programs that are wholly insensitive to the challenges of individual classrooms — and to the learning needs of individual teachers. Students enjoy a half-day off, while teachers are subjected to stock lectures on, say, what regulations they must follow when administering standardized tests.

Every year, the government spends more than \$4 billion on such professional development. That's about \$1,000 per instructor.

The returns on that investment have been non-existent. American student achievement has remained flat for thirty years. Less than one-third of American high-schoolers can read proficiently. Over a quarter read significantly below grade level. And just a quarter are proficient in math.

Even when teachers get data on their performance — or their students' — they receive little to no instruction on what to do with it and on what will help them strengthen their practice. As one teacher from Chicago said, "They always look at the . . . data but never talk about the next step; someone has to show us how we can use it to improve."

In many cases, that data can be used for punitive ends. The Los Angeles Times, for instance, publicly ranks more than 11,000 teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District based on student test scores.

It's no wonder that many teachers have soured on the idea of data-driven school reform altogether. In their experience, it serves solely to embarrass or punish them.

There's a better way. By using education data to drive personalized professional devel-

opment for each educator, school officials can put the data they're required to collect to good use and raise the skill level of their teachers — without alienating them in the process.

Consider a teacher whose evaluations show that she's having trouble keeping her students focused. Instead of boring her with a three-hour lecture, her administrators could set her up with teacher-development programs keyed to the exact size of her class and the specific nature of the distractions.

Attention-grabbing techniques that work for a group of 12 students won't necessary work for 30. The same is true for single-sex versus integrated classes — or those with varying numbers of non-native English speakers.

Likewise, technology can make evaluations less painful — and more meaningful — for both principals and teachers. A laptop loaded with data from previous observations can allow an administrator to hone in on only those teaching indicators that merit the most attention — and provide instantaneous feedback accompanied by videos of best practices from master teachers.

The stakes are high. Research shows that the number-one predictor of student success is the quality of his or her teacher. For instance, a math teacher with even slightly above-average skills increases student achievement scores by nearly 6 percent. That alone speaks volumes.

In order to produce better students, we must produce better teachers. The "Big Data" revolution that's taken hold in other parts of our society can do just that.

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