

Man sells firewood to pay dead wife's medical bills

25th November, 2016



An Internet campaign has come to the rescue of an 80-year-old man in the USA who was reduced to selling firewood on the roadside to pay for his wife's medical bills.

Octogenarian Kenneth Smith spent hours a day selling kindling for \$5 a bag. He started last year and was then helped by his wife of over 30 years, Helen, who was dying of lung cancer. Tragically, she lost her battle in October and Mr Smith was left with crippling hospital fees, which wiped out his life savings. A local woman, Jessica Pittman, saw Mr Smith and posted a Facebook message urging people to help him. Her post has been shared over 9,000 times and motorists have stopped their car to give Mr Smith some cash.

Ms Pittman's kind deed encouraged Mr Smith's son to go a step further and set up an online appeal. He created a page at the website GoFundMe and donations soon came flooding in from all corners of the Earth. The online campaign raised \$20,000 in three days. Ms Pittman told the BBC that she had "no clue" her actions would prompt such generosity. She said: "Although it will not lessen the heartache of losing his wife, I am thankful it will at least take a little worry off of his plate and help him make ends meet." Mr Smith said he has been "overwhelmed" with the response. He added that even though his wife wasn't by his side, he still feels her presence, "because she's looking down on me," he said.

Sources: sunherald.com / ksla.com / mprnews.org / bbc.com

Writing

Governments should provide free healthcare for citizens from taxes. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

campaign / rescue / firewood / medical bills / battle / life savings / motorists / cash / kind deed / online appeal / flooding / corners / generosity / heartache / presence

True / False

- An Internet campaign helped a man who was an octogenarian. T / F
- The man had been married for more than 30 years. T / F
- A woman 8,000 miles away posted a Facebook message to help him. T / F
- Car drivers stopped to give the man some money. T / F
- The man's daughter set up a web page to help him. T / F
- The man received money from all over the world. T / F
- A woman said the money would lessen the man's heartache. T / F
- The man said he no longer feels his wife is near him. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. campaign | a. encouraging |
| 2. battle | b. money |
| 3. wiped out | c. get by |
| 4. urging | d. fight |
| 5. cash | e. spirit |
| 6. deed | f. drive |
| 7. generosity | g. moved |
| 8. make ends meet | h. act |
| 9. overwhelmed | i. destroyed |
| 10. presence | j. kindness |

Discussion – Student A

- Have you ever given money to an online charity or appeal page?
- What do you think of people asking for financial help online?
- Why do we say 'all corners of the Earth' when the Earth is round?
- How generous are you?
- Do you find it difficult to make ends meet?
- When was the last time someone's kindness overwhelmed you?
- What else can people do to help Mr Smith?
- What questions would you like to ask Mr Smith?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. come to the | a. flooding in |
| 2. Tragically, she | b. their car |
| 3. wiped out his life | c. a step further |
| 4. a Facebook message urging | d. presence |
| 5. motorists have stopped | e. rescue |
| 6. encouraged Mr Smith's son to go | f. of the Earth |
| 7. donations soon came | g. savings |
| 8. from all corners | h. of losing his wife |
| 9. lessen the heartache | i. people to help him |
| 10. he still feels her | j. lost her battle |

Discussion – Student B

- How sad is it an 80-year-old struggles to pay hospital bills?
- Should all governments provide free health care?
- What do you think about what you read?
- What would you do at 80 if you needed money?
- How good is social media at helping people in need?
- What do you think of Ms Pittman's kind deed?
- How would you feel if your life savings were wiped out?
- What advice do you have for Mr Smith?

Spelling

- come to the eseurc
- iaogtarcneo Kenneth Smith
- gtlalacryi, she lost her battle
- Mr Smith was left with iriplncg hospital fees
- a Facebook message igurgn people to help
- toirosmt have stopped their car
- set up an online papela
- The online cmpgaani
- her actions would prompt such niestorgye
- it will not enslse the heartache
- he has been wmeldehreo with the response
- he still feels her prcesene

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. d	3. i	4. a	5. b
6. h	7. j	8. c	9. g	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Medical Bills

You think medical bills are the most important. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their bills/fees aren't as important. Also, tell the others which are the least important of these (and why): school fees, credit card bills or electricity bills.

Role B – School Fees

You think school fees are the most important. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their bills/fees aren't as important. Also, tell the others which are the least important of these (and why): medical bills, credit card bills or electricity bills.

Role C – Credit Card Bills

You think credit card bills are the most important. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their bills/fees aren't as important. Also, tell the others which are the least important of these (and why): school fees, medical bills or electricity bills.

Role D – Electricity Bills

You think electricity bills are the most important. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their bills/fees aren't as important. Also, tell the others which are the least important of these (and why): school fees, credit card bills or medical bills.

Speaking – Bills

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| • Medical bills | • Telephone bills |
| • School fees | • Water bills |
| • Electricity bills | • Bank fees |
| • Credit card bills | • Repair bills |

Answers – True False

a	T	b	T	c	F	d	T	e	F	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.