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A Hockey Game to Remember

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by Dan Kuhn

It all started one day while I was talking on the phone to a resident of Arenac County named Kathy Wilk. I met Kathy during the "Sheriff Bouldin Must Go" campaign that the Police Officers Association of Michigan and I were involved in for several years prior to his defeat in the most recent sheriff's race. Bouldin was our 2007 Horse's Ass Award recipient. I spent a lot of time in Arenac County, and got to know many good people during the campaign. One of those people was Kathy, and the day we spoke on the phone she inquired about whether or not the POAM might be able to assist in some way with a benefit dinner that Sheriff Mosciski and numerous others were hosting for a young boy who had lost his foot in a tragic boating accident last summer.

The effort was organized in attempt to raise some of the thousands of dollars needed to purchase a new prosthetic for the young boy. The POAM had endorsed Sheriff Mosciski and assisted him in his bid to become the Arenac County Sheriff, so Kathy thought we might be willing to help. After hearing the "Tyler Adams story" there was only one thing I could say, and that was "Heck, yes!" I told Kathy I would donate some Detroit Tiger tickets, and see what I could do about putting together some cash and make a donation at the benefit. After a little more conversation, I was told that Tyler was a big fan of Saginaw's OHL hockey team, the Saginaw Spirit. I immediately thought to myself that it would be nice to get Tyler to a Spirit game before the season ended. I checked the schedule and realized that there were only two more home dates left this year, so I called a long-time friend Dick Garber who owns the Saginaw Spirit and asked him if there was any way to make this night out for Tyler happen on short notice. I was only looking for some tickets to the game, and maybe a signed Spirit jersey. Without hesitation, Dick said,

“Whatever you need, Danny.” The plan started out as tickets, a signed jersey, and a visit to the locker room to meet the team.

That was when I decided to check with some other businesses I was familiar with and see if they could help make the night even a little more special. Mr. Garber also told me he would do some checking and see what other surprises he could come up with for Tyler. After a couple of days, I contacted Mr. Garber and told him I had arranged for a limousine and dinner for the Adams group on game night. I had also involved the Arenac County Sheriff Department and the Saginaw City Police Department who both contributed to the cause. Dick told me that he had spoken with the hockey club, and the co-owner of the team Craig Goslin, and that all were on board with making Tyler’s night at the rink a memorable one. The other good news was that co-owner Craig Goslin had friends at Michigan Orthopedic Services and he would contact them to see if they might help the Adams family in their goal of purchasing Tyler a new prosthetic foot. On game day, I met the limousine from Complete Limousine in Saginaw when it arrived at Jake’s, where the group was having dinner. I was informed by the limo driver that a second limo was meeting us at the stadium before the game. This second limo had been sent to Brighton to pick up the staff of Michigan Orthopedic Services. It was then I began to realize that this night may end up being even more special than anyone could have anticipated.

After dinner Tyler headed down to the Dow Event Center where the Saginaw Spirit Hockey Club had arranged for Tyler to meet and talk with the players before the game. After the introductions at the rink, Tyler and the group were led to the locker room where he met and spoke with the team. To try and describe that event is hard to do with words. You could have heard a pin drop in that locker room when Tyler told the players about his accident. At one point, he even toured the room and showed each of them his prosthetic foot by lifting up his pant leg. To tell you that everyone in the joint was touched would be an understatement. I think we all recognized just how lucky we all were to have our bodies intact and have the abilities we do to complete the day to day tasks we all have. It was also very clear what a special a young man Tyler Adams is. In just a few short minutes a 13-year-old boy humbled us, and made a memory that will no doubt be a lasting one for all of us, including the future NHL players sitting on those benches.

I’d like to say “Thank You,” to the all of the Saginaw Spirit Hockey Players in the room that night. I was aware of how big of a game was at hand that Saturday, and to spare Tyler their time was an act of kindness that myself and Tyler’s family will never forget. Tyler loves his jersey, and still carries the hockey puck he received that night with him. Tyler’s next stop was center ice to drop the puck. Tyler and his father, Scott Adams, walked onto the ice with their Saginaw Spirit jerseys on. Tyler was even wearing a Saginaw Police Department ball cap which I thought was especially cool. The excitement on their faces was again one of the most memorable events I have ever witnessed. After the drop of the puck, a couple more special guests walked out onto the ice. Dennis Durco, President and CFO, and Scott Baranek from Michigan Orthopedic Services joined Scott and Tyler for what was announced as a special surprise presentation. As I stood and watched from the penalty box, the sold-out arena became very quiet as it was revealed that Michigan Orthopedic Services was donating a top-of-the-line, state-of-the-art special prosthetic to Tyler that will allow him to resume the active life that every teenage boy desires. Tyler especially wants to try it out on the baseball diamond this summer, and I plan on witnessing that feat when it occurs.

After the presentation, everyone was finally taken to the area where we would get to watch the game. The area, not to my surprise, was directly at ice level on the glass. It even had a buffet set up for the guests. Between periods

Tyler was kept busy too. He helped finish the ice on the Zamboni during one break, and he and his dad visited with Art Lewis on WSGW 790 to help promote the benefit fund raiser during the other. The hospitality exhibited that night by the Saginaw Spirit staff members was second to none; they are truly a top-shelf operation that the Mid-Michigan region is fortunate to have. I would like to finish this article by personally thanking again all of the people involved in Tyler's night out. You all reminded this veteran police officer that courage, compassion, and kindness still exist. In this line of work, we can sometimes forget that. As police officers, I think we forget sometimes to realize the positive impact we can have on people's lives with a little effort. Our job allows us to make contacts and network unlike many other professions. I certainly never could have predicted the impact on a 13-year-old boy's life a simple phone call could make. The night's events certainly provide evidence of something I always say: "The POAM is a much better friend than foe." My employment with this organization, and the Saginaw City Police Department put me in a position to be able to really make a difference in someone's life. They say everything happens for a reason, and how true that is sometimes! Even though the team didn't win that night, the win I witnessed that evening can't be measured by any scoreboard, any gate receipt, an NHL contract, or any amount of money. It was the biggest night of Tyler's Adams's life, and the most kind and decent thing I've ever had the privilege to be part of. I'm sure glad I made that phone call to Dick Garber, and I'm honored to call him my friend.



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