

GoFundMe has soared above \$85k for Walter Carr



Bellhops CEO Luke Marklin gives the keys to his car to Walter Carr

Last night, July 20, I heard the story of Walter Carr. The kindness of people is so wonderful that I had to share the story. One of the more informative articles was written by Briana Harris on July 18, 2018. So instead of rewriting it, I will quote Ms. Harris.

PELHAM – *With a broken-down car and only one chance to make a good first impression at a new job, young college student Walter Carr did what he felt like he had to do and walked to work.*

But Carr's simple decision was only the beginning of an inspirational story that includes a 20-mile trek in the darkness, the kindness of local police officers, national acclaim, a new car and more than \$62,000 raised via a GoFundMe account.

Chris and Jenny Lamey met Carr when their doorbell rang at about 6:30 a.m. on Saturday, July 14. A Pelham police officer told the couple he had picked up "this nice kid" walking along the side of the road before daybreak.

It all started after Carr's 2003 Nissan Altima broke down and he didn't have a way to make it to his first day on the job with Bellhops, a moving company.

He used Google Maps to calculate the time it would take to walk from his house to his job assignment – seven hours. According to Lamey, Carr ate around midnight and headed out on foot in time to make it to work by 8 a.m. where he was set to help the family pack up their belongings and move to a new house.

By about 2 a.m., he'd made his way to Hoover and around 4 a.m. he'd made it Pelham. It was in Pelham that his journey took an unexpected turn.

Pelham police officer Mark Knighten was the first to encounter Carr walking along the side of the road in Pelham. Knighten asked Carr if everything was alright and that's when Carr explained his situation.

Knighten and two other police officers took Carr to get some breakfast and then dropped him off at a church where they thought would be the safest place for him rest for a bit before he had to be at work.

Officer Scott Duffey was just beginning his shift when he heard about Carr's story. Duffey went in search of Carr who had already left the church to continue his walk to work. Duffey picked Carr up and drove him to Lamey's house.

"We introduced ourselves to Walter and told the officer he was just fine to stay here with us until the rest of the crew arrived," Lamey said. "I asked Walter if he wanted to go upstairs and rest until everyone else arrived. He declined and said he could go ahead and get started. So, he began working alongside Chris and I before the rest of the crew arrived."

Lamey learned that Carr and his mother were transplants forced from their home in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina, and that Carr hoped to join the Marines.

Lamey was so impressed with Carr that she took to Facebook to share her encounter with him. Lamey's post about the story on Facebook has generated about 700 comments, 2,000 shares and 7,000 reactions.

"I just can't tell you how touched I was by Walter and his journey," she said. "He is humble and kind and cheerful, and he had big dreams! He is hardworking and tough. I can't imagine how many times on that lonely walk down 280 in the middle of the night did he want to turn back. How many times did he wonder if this was the best idea. How many times did he want to find a place to sit or lie down and wait til morning when he could maybe get someone to come pick him up and bring him back home. But he walked until he got here! I am in total awe of this young man!"

Lamey also set up a GoFundMe account for Carr that has reached \$62,479 in just two days and is continuing to climb. More than 1,600 people from all 50 states and internationally have donated money to Carr.

According to Lamey, financial advisor Evan Carter with ACG Wealth has volunteered his services to help Carr plan, save and manage the money.

Carr's journey also reached the ears of Luke Marklin, the CEO of Bellhops. On Monday, July 16, Marklin decided to travel from Tennessee to Birmingham under the guise of meeting Carr for coffee to personally thank him for his dedication.

But Marklin's true intention was to surprise Carr by gifting him his own personal car, a 2014 Ford Escape.

Marklin said he was blown away by Carr's heart and grit. Carr was speechless when Marklin handed over the keys to his car.

Lamey said she decided to set up a GoFundMe for Carr after receiving hundreds of messages on Facebook from people wanting to help Carr. The goal was to raise \$2,000 to help him with his car troubles.

Staff Writer Stephen Dawkins of the Shelby County Reporter contributed to this story.