

A community unites behind two children after their lemonade stand was robbed

When life hands you lemons, sometimes it takes a village to make lemonade. That's exactly what happened when Rebecca and Josh Caldwell's sweet summer business turned sour.

The Caldwell siblings were sitting on their front lawn selling lemonade when a stranger approached their stand in Chesapeake, Virginia.

"He said it was cool that we were doing a lemonade stand," Rebecca recalled.

What happened next caught them completely off guard - the man snatched their money jar and sped away with about \$40 of hard-earned cash.

"I was pretty scared," Rebecca said. "And it made me mad." The siblings ran inside to tell their mom, Annetta Caldwell, who called the police.

"They came in very upset and I was incredibly angry," Annetta said. "My adrenaline was through the roof."

However, after her disbelief and anger subsided, Annetta decided to turn the experience into a life lesson about forgiveness and resilience. So she and her husband encouraged their children to host another lemonade stand.

“I didn't want them to be afraid of doing them,” Annetta said. “And I talked to them about forgiving the guy because I know if you don't forgive, you're going to have bitterness in your heart.”

Word spread quickly, and when their new lemonade stand opened for business, the scene was extraordinary. More than 650 people came from near and far. Friends, neighbors, local firefighters, police officers, and even bikers arrived to show their support.

“I was blown away by the support of the community and how much love we felt,” Annetta said.

“Oh my goodness, it was festive. It was like a big block party,” said Mark Reeves, a family friend who came to support. “We wanted to show the opposite of what the spirit was when this man stole from them - instead of stealing, we're going to bless.”

The outpouring didn't stop there. The children's story also touched hearts nationwide, bringing cards, letters, and donations flooding in.

“People care about when something bad happens to a child,” said Mark, a high school teacher at Chesapeake Public Schools. “We have so many things that divide us in our communities and country, but there're certain things at the core - we love our children.”