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Some People You Should Know

Sometimes we hear a lot about what is wrong with middle schools and their students. We hear about test scores, drooping pants, bullying, and gossip. But that is not the whole story. Adolescents can also be intensely curious, charged with energy, ready with an opinion, and generous when someone needs help.

On a recent Friday afternoon in January four London seventh graders, Brad Johnson, Derek Rivard, Charlie Toton, and Michael Vivacqua were waiting for wrestling practice to be finished so they could meet a couple of their friends. They planned to hang together and maybe stop by Walgreens. They were waiting on the path by Husky Park when some high school boys and girls walked by. Our boys' conversation was interrupted with a crack. The ice in the retention pond had given way to the weight of the teenagers and a tall boy was in the middle of the water up to his chest.

Brad, Derek, Charlie, and Michael heard muffled sounds of anger and confusion and then a clear voice to, "call '911." Our boys made an attempt to reach the boy in the open water. The high schoolers shouted out to discourage the Lightning brigade by telling them it was too dangerous. Despite this, our boys tried but couldn't make it. They went back to shore and started to break up the ice. Their idea was to carve a path for the boy to walk out. From the center, the high school boy broke off chunks of ice and tossed them to the side. Soon, he met our boys, who were knee deep in the frigid waters. Once out of the water, it was obvious that the drenched high school boy was in shock, embarrassed, and immobile. His friends helped him to get warm and dry clothes while our boys caught their breath. Returning to London for help, our boys found Ms. Salter, our Family and Consumer Science teacher, who helped the boys dry their clothes and themselves.

This is a great story for many reasons. Our boys demonstrated bravery, resourcefulness, and resilience. This story is a reminder to parents and educators alike that our children who cannot pick up their rooms, who at times appear distant, defiant, and self-involved, are also capable of great feats of selflessness.

Adolescents can be risk takers, independent doers, and great friends. I know of one high school student who is thankful for that. Special thanks to Brad, Derek, Charlie, and Michael for their brave act and also for providing an opportunity for us to focus on important things in life.