



To Save a Life In Minnesota Today

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Moments before Shabbat a couple of weeks ago, my spouse was shutting down her phone when she saw an e-mail request requiring an immediate response. A young person was asking if they could come over the next afternoon, Shabbat afternoon, and hang out with us. Absolutely—we could not say no.

Sammy, in their early 20s, came to know my spouse through an amazing program in the Twin Cities for youth who are seeking to succeed in work and life through experiential learning. Generally, these are young people in their late teens, who are moving through life with extra challenges and often within situations that create for them hard life moments. Coming from area high schools, participants, many of whom are of color, are part of the LGBTQ+ community and/or are living through a variety of challenging life circumstances, come to this program and discover a safe and supportive space of learning, confidence building, and skill growth through the hands-on process of building hand made boats. The finished boat is generally not the ultimately 'desired' outcome, rather it is the amazing way these young people deepen and grow their own sense of self and capacity for being in the world in which they live.

Sammy, who was adopted from India, is a recent graduate of this program. In the year or two since leaving, they have successfully used their new skills in a variety of areas of personal growth while they also continue to discern what is next for them in their life.

That Saturday night, when Sammy came to our house, we welcomed them to just hang out with us. We always have a puzzle going, and we invited their help in adding pieces. After a bit, they curled up in the corner of the couch and did as many youth do these days: began scrolling through their phone. When dinner time rolled around, we invited Sammy to join us. Although they at first declined stating that they had eaten a late lunch, we insisted, as it is much more interesting to cook more than less good food—so they would do us a favor to eat some of it with us. After dinner, more phone scrolling, and then I left Sammy and my spouse to chat and enjoy the fire we had built in our wood fire stove.

Sometime later, Sammy's father came by to pick them up. We chatted a bit before bidding them good night and thanking them for helping make such a fine evening for us. As Sammy left, my spouse and I smiled, grateful that they were comfortable to call and ask for help, for company. These are crazy days here in Minnesota, here in the United States. Being able to provide a safe space, a small harbor of gentleness, for even one hurting soul, is a great gift. For us that night, having Sammy be able to be in a space of warmth and welcome, was not only a gift of

safety and wellbeing for them, but was also a precious opportunity to make a difference in an otherwise messy world. Just as the Talmud teaches, “To Save a Life is to Save a World.” (Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 37a)