

CAL-MAINE NEWS

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The story of Melvin Bonds Cal-Maine's Corporate Safety Manager goes viral

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When Jackson police officer Melvin Bonds and 5-year-old Ethan Pixley were reunited for the first time since their photo was shared across the country on Facebook, it was hard to tell they hadn't known each other for years.

"What are you supposed to do? Look me in the eye now," Bonds said, and with an adoring smile, Ethan looked up at his new friend.

Bonds and Ethan met at Chick-Fil-A on County Line Road in Jackson on Thursday night. Bonds, who has been with JPD since 2007, had just attended a meeting during which he was assigned to Precinct 4, so his meeting with Ethan and his family was his first experience in his new precinct.

Ethan was talking to another officer when he eyed Bonds and went to talk to him, so Bonds invited the boy to eat dinner with him, with his mother's permission, of course.

The two hit it off, Ashley Cook Harley said. It was so endearing, she said, that she took a picture and posted it to Facebook, never knowing that it would touch so many people.

"Ethan LOVES policemen!! Everywhere we go he seems to find one, talk to them, and give them a hug. But, this time he found a special one," she wrote. "Officer Bonds invited Ethan to come eat with him at his table and even asked him to pray before they ate. He then spent 20 minutes talking to my son about how important it is for him to be good at school, make good grades, and how to stay out of trouble,

Bonds is a reserve officer with JPD, officials said. Yet his example is one that carries full-time weight with many people on social media — especially with one 5-year-old.

"It's a great thing that you're doing, you're impacting these kids lives like you wouldn't believe. It's such a kind gesture," Harley said. "Look how far it's gone. Just a 20 minute conversation with a 5-year-old, and it's reached the whole country. It's great what you're doing and I appreciate it, coming from a mother."

The soft spoken officer said he doesn't see himself as having done anything extraordinary and that it's something that he thinks many in law enforcement would take time to do.

"All the men and women of JPD would have done the same thing had the opportunity presented itself. I feel very strongly about that," he said.

Jackson police Chief Lee Vance said he couldn't be prouder of the example set by Bonds, who could have simply hugged the child and said hello and enjoyed his meal by himself.



Melvin Bonds and Ethan Pixley

That's part of who you are and what we should be about. I think there's not enough of that going on in the world.



Ethan and his new friend Officer Bonds



Ethan says he wants to grow up to be a police officer to help people and catch the bad guys. Asked if he wants to be a specific kind of police officer, he said, "Like a regular kind."

"Ethan's generosity is outstanding and very genuine, and we certainly appreciate that," Vance said. "The officer who took time to sit and talk with the young man and eat with him, that's exactly what we're trying to get accomplished. That's community policing. Obviously it says that this child's impression of the Jackson Police Department has been enhanced greatly. He looks upon us as heroes, and his officer showed himself to be worthy of that type of praise to take the time to be kind."

Harley said she doesn't have any law enforcement officers in her family and Ethan has simply always loved rescue workers of all kinds.

"Everywhere we go, he's drawn to them, and that's the first thing he sees when he goes anywhere — first responders," she said. "It doesn't matter if it's policemen or firemen. I love it."

Ethan said he plans to take Bonds' advice.

He said, "Learn in school and work on your papers," Ethan said. And when asked what he plans to do Monday, Ethan said, "Learn and be good in school."

"I just wanted everyone to see the positive side of what police do from day to day. That's important too," Harley said. On Sunday, she said she never expected the photo to go as far as it has, having been shared thousands of times and with over 40,000 likes as of Sunday night.

But the fact that it resonated so much with so many people was a happy surprise. She said that she has gotten lots of positive feedback.

"Maybe it's that he prayed with him. That was a big part to me, as a mama. I think that had a lot to do with it," she said.

The environment at Chick-Fil-A is a positive one for prayer, Bonds said, but he also said he supports the stance that Mayor Tony Yarber, the City Council and Vance have taken that prayer works and will work to better the city.

"That's part of who you are and what we should be about. I think there's not enough of that going on in the world," Bonds said. "We should keep cultivating these things — and not behind closed doors. Everything should be about that, how we conduct ourselves in public. Being an officer is a calling."