

We were doing our casual initial drive through assessment of the community when he came bounding out of his yard and right up to my truck. Gentle giant, I thought – I hoped. A tall muscular, handsome young Native American named Nick. And yes, he would prove to be a gentle giant.

Nick and I had just started greeting one another when Tory pulled up close behind me in his truck. Nick said, “He wants you to move.” I looked in my rearview and said, “Oh, that’s just my boss, let’s make him wait” and gave Nick a little wink. Nick questioned “that’s your boss?” “Yep” I said, “His name is Tory, what’s your name” ignoring his concern about my holding up traffic. “Nick” he said as he glanced back and forth between me and ‘the boss’ now grinning from ear to ear while Tory was playfully nudging for me to move. Nick knew then we were a different bunch and he liked it.



A few days later when I knocked on Nick’s door with a nomination and to meet his grandma Kathy, Nick greeted me with that same ear to ear grin. His excitement over the Impact Cares Team had simmered up to a boiling point by then and he couldn’t wait to announce that he wanted to volunteer - and grandma had agreed to let him!



We had guessed Nick to be 16 or 17ish and he was in spirit, but he was actually 21. Nick is autistic along with other disabilities not visible, and unless you spent more than an hour with him you may never know. He is a ‘Special Olympian’ who can dead lift 405 lbs – a talent he was eager to put to use on volunteer workday. Kathy, his grandmother, was an ex-biker and I instantly saw where Nick got the personality and that smile. She had legally adopted Nick and his sister at a young age and she has done a superb job of raising them. Over the next week Nick had become a constant companion to the team and spent time with each one of us depending on the workday. He was willing to do anything, for anyone and he became an important asset during our time in the community. Everyone loved Nick, the team, the residents, everyone. Nick (and Kathy) worked tirelessly all day during our volunteer day and neither ever once complained. At some point during the day Kathy rushed up to me, threw her arms around my neck and said, “Thank you, thank you!” When I ask what for she said for giving me a new back door and for being so good to Nick. I told her that it was a team effort and that it was an absolute pleasure for all of us.

Nick and Grandmother Kathy are some of the most beautiful people we have ever had the pleasure of loving. And finding them did not come through a door knock, it happened in a moment of openness and playfulness – a meeting ordained by our Lord.

Nick has continued his Special Olympic journey and continually wins 1st and 2nd place metals at each event. In December of 2021 Nick had an accident that stole his forefinger and almost his thumb. He recovered like a trooper and has not let it hold him back. This past winter was harsh in the UP and Nick had another chance to use his weightlifting talents for the good of others. There was an accident with an ambulance in transit to the local hospital with a gravely ill person onboard. The ambulance slid off the road in the snow and ice and became lodged in the ditch. Nick used his tremendous abilities to help lift the ambulance back onto the road so they could deliver the individual onboard to the safety of doctors. The mayor of Sault Ste. Marie and the city police department honored Nick for his bravery and strength. *Nick Kammer, you are our Hero!*

