

## Repaying A Homeless Man's Kindness by Dominique Mosbergen

After a homeless man offered a college student in England all the money he had so she'd be able to get home safely, the woman is paying it forward -- in a massive way.

Throughout the past few days, Dominique Harrison-Bentzen has raised almost \$50,000 for the good Samaritan and for other homeless individuals in her community. The story begins in early December. It was about 3 a.m. and Harrison-Bentzen was panicking. "I came out after a student night out ... [and] realized I didn't have any battery on my phone, I'd lost my friends," the 22-year-old told BBC Radio 5. She'd also lost her bank card, she discovered, and she had no money. "How am I going to afford a taxi?" she asked herself.

Just then, a homeless man, known only as Robbie, approached the young woman and asked her if she needed help. He proceeded to reach into his pocket and pull out all the money he had -- loose change amounting to about \$4.60. He insisted that Harrison-Bentzen take it to pay for a taxi so she'd get home safe. It was, it seems, all the money Robbie had.

Harrison-Bentzen, a student at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston, England, says she refused to take Robbie's money and found another way to get home. But following her encounter with the generous man, she says she couldn't get him out of her mind.

For the next few days, the student searched for Robbie, driving around the streets with her mom and using social media in an attempt locate the man. In that time, Harrison-Bentzen says she learned more about Robbie and discovered that he actually had a reputation for helping strangers. For example, the student said in a Dec. 9 Facebook post that Robbie had been known to return wallets "untouched to pedestrians" and "offering his scarf to keep people warm."

Finally, after four days of driving around Preston, Harrison-Bentzen found Robbie. "I was beginning to lose hope that I would see him again, to thank him personally for his kindness," she said, per The Telegraph.

Harrison-Bentzen was determined to do something to help change Robbie's life. To "help him," she said, as he had "helped many others."

So, earlier this month, the student launched a fundraising campaign in Robbie's name. She explained that she would be spending 24 hours on the streets, so as to "understand the difficulties" that the homeless face on a daily basis.

"Please sponsor me \$4.60 -- as Robbie attempted to give me his only \$4.60," Harrison-Bentzen wrote in the campaign description, adding that the money raised would go to helping Robbie get an apartment. "Together our small act of kindness can change someone's life this Christmas and finally get him off the streets safe and warm."

Harrison-Bentzen, who spent the night on the streets on Tuesday this week -- an experience she called "far harder" than expected, says she had initially hoping to raise about \$780 with her campaign. Her expectations, however, were quickly blown out of the water.

Her story quickly went viral, touching the hearts of people in all corners of the globe.

As of Thursday morning, 4,800 people have donated almost \$50,000.

"It just keeps on coming in," Harrison-Bentzen said of the outpouring of support, per The Telegraph. "The fundraising site keeps crashing because everybody is trying to get on to it." She added that she was blown away by the response.

Harrison-Bentzen says she's currently seeking advice as to how the money should be distributed. Some of it, she told BBC Radio 5, will go to providing Robbie with a home; she hopes to use the rest to support other homeless individuals in the Preston area.

Ultimately, Harrison-Bentzen says she hopes her story will inspire others to be kind to those around them and to pay it forward when they can.

"I hope my campaign will help people think a little more about the people around them, Christmas is a good time to think about other people," the student told The Mirror. "If people can see what I am doing then maybe they can take the time to just stop and talk to a homeless person, hear their story."