

**MUM TOOK JAMES IN – AND SAYS HE CAN STAY UNTIL HE FINDS A PLACE**

# A home for Christmas ...thanks to kindly Ellie

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ELLIE Crawford carried out an amazing random act of kindness after a chance meeting in a pub.

Ellie, spotted a young man drinking alone in the Foresters Arms, in Castle Road, Colchester.

She found out 18-year-old James was homeless and living at Colchester Night Shelter, so she invited him to stay with her in New Town, Colchester over Christmas.

Now the 43-year-old mother-of-one has told James he can stay until Colchester Council housing officials manage to find him a flat to rent.

She said: "I was sitting in the pub after being the last person out of Sainsbury's in Stanway, on Christmas Eve.

"I just wanted a quick drink to calm down.

"I want to be able to help him back onto his feet.

"He won't want to be with us forever, but I'd love to give him the chance to restart his life.

"Nothing that's happened to him is his fault, it could happen to anyone.

"If more people help others we'd be in a better place."

The teenager had been staying with Ellie and her six-year-old son, William, a few days, when William asked his mum if James could live with them.

James, who has asked us not to print his full name, is originally from Hertfordshire, and became homeless in November 2011 after his mother died of cancer and his father kicked him out.

He spent time living rough in Cambridge and then Clacton, before coming to Colch-

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■ Festive welcome – Ellie Crawford's gesture has given a homeless teenager new hope

Picture: SEANA HUGHES CO74468\_01

ester in September last year.

After a month, he was living in the night shelter, in Alexandra Road.

James said had been at such a low ebb before his chance meeting with Ellie, he

had even tried to kill himself.

He said: "I was just sitting in the pub with half a pint of lager the barman had bought me and I heard someone say: 'Hey, you in the green.'

"I turned around and asked if she was talking to me and she asked me sit down.

"After that, she wouldn't let me go back to the shelter.

"She just said, 'come back'."

## PRAISE FROM NATIONAL GROUP

ELLIE'S gesture sets an example the rest of the country ought to follow, according to the director of the group, Kindness UK. David Jamilly founded the organisation in 2011 to promote acts of kindness.

He said: "What Miss Crawford has done is achievable for

anyone and is a great example for other people.

"I think people are inherently kind, but we live in a fast-paced society and there are so many things people think they have to do.

"Being kind perhaps slips down the list of priorities."



## Michael gives Jade a new phone

A GENEROUS Gazette reader has put his hand in his own pocket to replace a young girl mobile phone after reading how she fell victim to pickpockets.

Jade De'Ath, pictured left, had her £130 Blackberry phone – a Christmas present – swiped while she was out in Colchester town centre.

Michael O'Dwyer, 65, of

Crossfield Road, Clacton, read about it and decided to buy her a new one.

He said: "I just thought I would like to help the girl, I had some spare money and thought, 'why not?'"

"We are in really hard times and we all have to rally around to help each other.

"To be able to help is a

great feeling and I just hope she enjoys it."

Jade, 12, of Armoury Road, West Bergholt, was out in Culver Square shopping centre on December 29 when her Blackberry 9320 was taken from her pocket.

The St Helena School pupil said: "It's really nice for someone to do this for me. I'm looking forward to

being able to use it to keep in touch with all my friends."

Mum Emma De'Ath said: "I was really annoyed, because we'd saved up all year to be able to buy the phone and when it went missing, I knew I couldn't afford to replace it.

"This really restores your faith in human nature."