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### UNUSUAL TRIO REVEALS TRUE MEANING OF SERVICE

**AMY E. MORGAN -**

I got a heavy lesson in the meaning of service this summer from an unlikely trio: my 14-year-old son, Abram, [Southwest Airlines](#) and the U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus. They taught me that the service you get doesn't always depend on the amount of money you fork over.

At 9:30 one morning, I left my son at the Buffalo Airport. He was headed to Shiprock, N.M., with 45 youth and adult traveling companions from Trinity United Methodist Church. Their destination was the Navajo Nation, where they would spend just under a week helping to repair roofs and housing interiors, build wheelchair ramps, possibly help dig a well and generally work on whatever needed to be done to improve living conditions.

At 40, I have never undertaken a service project for others as my son did. At 14, I lacked the courage, desire and spiritual depth to leave my family for a week and travel more than 2,000 miles to serve others. Abram set a heady example, and certainly raised the bar by which I measure my own life.

After work, I got home to a phone message from Southwest Airlines in Phoenix. The flight attendants had found four disposable cameras in a bag underneath Abram's seat with our phone number on them, and wanted to let us know they would hold them in the lost and found.

My heart sank. I knew it was a small thing, but I was disappointed his trip had started this way.

I took a chance and called Southwest in Phoenix and spoke to Sally at the lost-and-found counter. I told her Abram was most likely still in the airport collecting luggage and waiting for vans with the group. Sally couldn't have been more pleasant.

Within minutes, she confirmed she had the cameras. She said she would page him, and took my name and number in case she couldn't get them to him. It was a small thing to do, and some would simply dismiss it by saying, "that's her job." But she made me feel like it was the most important task on her list, and yes, she calmed a mother already missing her son.

At 6 o'clock that evening, I headed to Artpark in Lewiston with my husband and some friends to listen to the U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus. It was a good plan, I thought, to help pass the first night of the 10 days Abram would be away.

What a stellar performance. It was a free concert, and by all rights, Artpark should have been filled to the rafters instead of only two-thirds full. The band's instrumental and vocal performance was first class. It didn't matter that the band wasn't playing to a full house. It was there to provide a service to each person individually - - at least that's the way it seemed to me.

The musicians and singers provided a means for each audience member to recognize, celebrate and pay tribute to all of the branches of our armed services and the freedoms that we celebrate because of them. At the end of the concert, I said a silent thank you to my dad and two brothers -- all Air Force -- for their service and the freedoms I enjoy.

For me, service has always had that ring of "what have I received?" Now I can hear the answering echo of "what can I give?" I'm not sure how, but surely there are opportunities waiting for me if I just follow in the paths of a certain 14-year-old, a considerate airline employee and a band giving a free concert.

AMY MORGAN lives on Grand Island. "Service" is now a prominent item on her mental "to do" list. For submission guidelines on columns appearing in this space, visit the Buffalo.com Web site and click on Front Page, then click on Opinion, click on My View and click on Guidelines; or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Opinion Pages Guidelines, The Buffalo News, P.O. Box 100, Buffalo, NY 14240.

**Amy E. Morgan**

COLUMN: MY VIEW

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