

Wednesday, July 28th

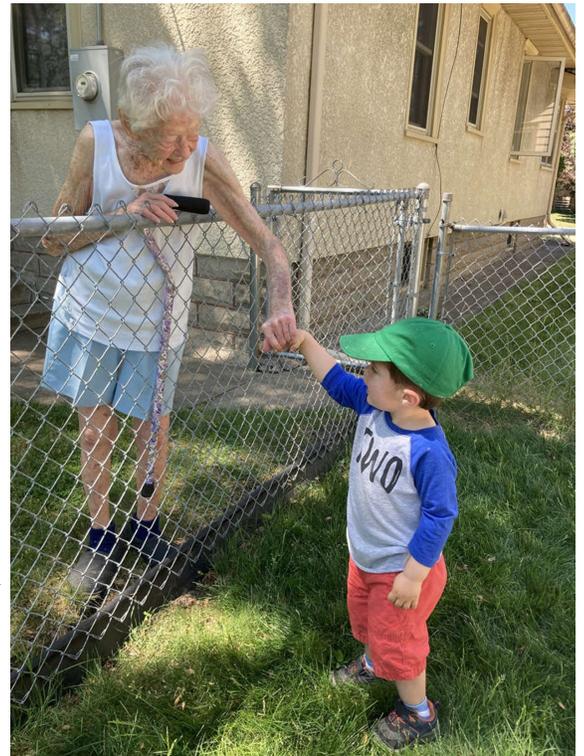
Pandemic leads to unlikely friendship between toddler and 99-year-old neighbor

Rachel Paula Abrahamson for TODAY and msn.com

The bright spot of the [pandemic](#) for Benjamin Olson, a 2-year-old boy in Minnesota, has been becoming [best friends with his next-door neighbor](#). Her name is Mary O'Neill and she will celebrate her 100th birthday in December. "For more than a year, he didn't see other kids. He didn't interact with anyone except our family and Mary," Benjamin's mom, Sarah Olson, told [TODAY Parents](#). "They ended up forming an incredibly strong bond."



At first, O'Neill, who lost her husband 37 years ago, would just wave at Benjamin from behind a window. Then, she began venturing outside to say hello. Soon, the two were having regular meet-ups by a fence that separates their homes. Benjamin keeps me company," O'Neill told TODAY Parents. When the weather is nice, O'Neill and Benjamin will sit on her steps and blow bubbles together. "Sometimes he'll get up and grab a piece of sand or a rock and give it to me as a gift," O'Neill said. "He makes me feel good."



Early on in their friendship, O'Neill created a game where Benjamin kicks her a ball and she passes it back to him with her cane. She calls it cane ball. O'Neill also gifted the little boy with a big box of toy trucks that belonged to her late son. "Mary carried this big laundry basket filled with heavy trucks up from her basement. I have no idea how she did it. But she carried out those trucks, no problem," Sarah recalled. O'Neill said the trucks are helping Benjamin to learn his colors.

Recently, NBC affiliate [KARE 11](#) interviewed O'Neill and the Olsons about the unlikely friendship. Sarah said she got teary-eyed as she listened to O'Neill share what Benjamin means to her. "Mary is fiercely independent. She doesn't really show her cards," Sarah explained. "So I got really emotional when I heard her say that she missed Benjamin on the days when it was too cold or rainy to go outside." Benjamin felt the same way. "Mary really is Benjamin's best friend," Sarah said. "She's his first best friend."



This Repair Shop is on a Mission to Fix Our Throwaway Culture

by [Andy Corbley](#) for [goodnewsnetwork.org](#)

The urge for most of us is to throw something away—even if it means we have to buy a new one for more money—as it's often easier than finding a store that will fix it, taking it there, then going out later and picking it back up, all with the chance that it might break again in the future. But the residents of one Glasgow neighborhood are taking on that important responsibility.

After a mend and repair shop opened in the Govanhill neighborhood, hundreds of residents began bringing in broken electronics and clothes to be repaired, resisting the urge to rid themselves of the problem by going on Amazon and getting a new one.

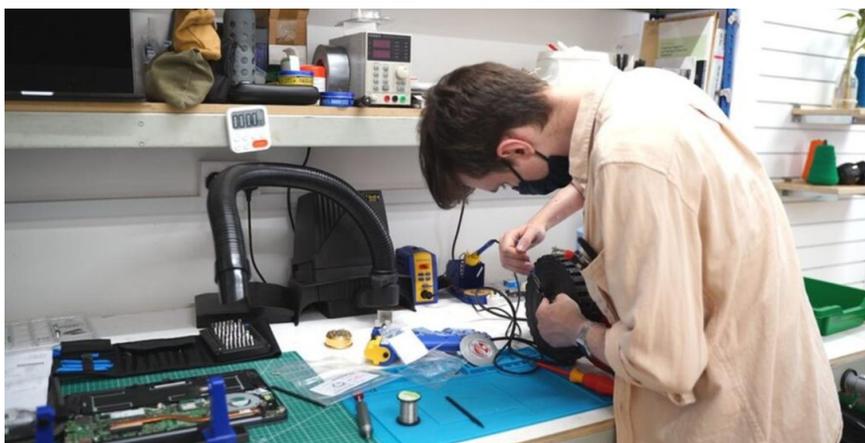
The shop is called [Remade](#), and it's looking to change the way Britain consumes. A team of technicians, general repairmen, and tailors work, not out of charity, but as part of what the [BBC](#) described as a thriving business fixing every imaginable gadget, home appliance, lawn machine, garment, jewelry, and even Christmas ornament.

Along with mending broken items, Remade also works to find items new homes as a second-hand outlet, as well as connecting unneeded laptops or other internet-connected gadgets with homes that lack them. So far [they've supplied 1,000 computers](#) to people after receiving donations from Glasgow city council.

The BBC spoke with one repeat customer who said she had a watershed moment when an extension cable she owned stopped working. "My immediate response was, well that sucks—I guess I will go to an online retailer like Amazon and buy another one," she said. "Then I thought—hang on, there's absolutely no need to do that—I know this place is open just down the road."

It's not easy these days to see that thought through to the end. But it's the right thing to do for the planet in a sense, as old electronics are contributing enormously to non-degradable landfill waste. Furthermore, it's not only the burden of transporting, storing, and tossing e-waste in a landfill, but the emissions that come from producing its replacement.

Computers, phones, and tablets for example need microchips that rely on lithium to produce, which is a rare earth mineral that is costly—both in terms of dollars and CO2 emissions—to mine. Fortunately it's not only GNN who knows this, and the Remade staff has grown to eleven employees to keep up with the demand of Scots taking on the mission of having their old stuff fixed up.



The two stories in this week's Minitas were chosen because of the simplicity of their beauty. Growing up I never would have thought that a friendship between a young child and his elderly neighbor would be considered "unlikely", nor that a small appliance (etc.) repair shop would be considered cutting-edge. Yet, that is the case. Just a few weeks ago I was bemoaning the fact that my daughter's one-year-old Keurig is already broken and everyone's solution is to toss it and get a new one. Being the child of children of the Depression, this is absolute insanity in my mind. Even in frugal WNY, I cannot locate a repair shop. I found a great community program called [Dare to Repair](#), but frankly I am more of a drop-it-off and pick-it-up kind of gal, so I lament the little repair shops of yesteryear. More so, I lament the "unlikely" nature of a friendship between a toddler and the Centenarian next door. Yet in these two stories I see *silver linings* on both the pandemic and the economic downturn, yielding "unlikely" friendships and mindfulness of consumer waste. Rather than getting all curmudgeony on you all, I will choose to be thankful for *everything old being new again*, folks seeing the value in friends with big differences, and other folks having the good sense to repair what shouldn't be packing our overburdened landfills. In both these cases a sense of neighborhood and community were doubtless enhanced, and that is indeed something to be thankful for. .

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