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Export date: Fri Oct 30 4:45:16 2026 / +0000 GMT

# Trying to see the fox through the hurly-burly

by JAMES MATTHEWS

Once in a while, you find something shiny and bright through the murk.

The Bancroft Times and Bancroft This Week, sister papers to the Citizen and Free Press, told the story earlier this month about 12-year-old Avery, her grandmother Julie Parco, and their attempt to save a young fox they found sick with mange.

Julie had been gardening in early August when she happened upon a red fox that she thought was sleeping. The tiny animal had rested on a bit of moss on the property, curled in a corner made of logs integrated into the landscaping.

The fox had cuts and bald spots in its fur. The fox attempted to walk a few times but collapsed each time it stood on shaky legs.

The ailing animal was placed in one of those blue bins for items to be recycled. The fox was comfortably set on a blanket and provided water to weather a trip to an animal rescue facility.

Avery insisted on sitting in the vehicle's backseat, beside the animal, as they drove about an hour and a half on a beautiful summer day to the Woodlands Wildlife Sanctuary in Minden. The sanctuary rehabs rescued wildlife before they're released back into their natural environment. According to its website, more than 800 animals are brought to the sanctuary each year.

Unfortunately, the fox succumbed to its injuries and the effects of the parasite that causes mange. It died only about half an hour before they made it to the animal rescue centre.

The fact that Avery chose to go to such lengths for a fox on a beautiful sunny day, one of only six days she was to spend with her grandparents, showed a depth of compassion.

?He died peacefully with someone by his side rather than being left to nature for other animals to eat him,? Parco said.

Maybe we're our perfect selves when we are children. Unjaded and rich in compassion until we enter those middle years of social media trolls and the sneering horde. When the world spins us so it is easy to step past somebody on the street and on hard times instead of dropping even just a few coins into an empty paper coffee cup. Not all of us. But many of us.

Self-help books and therapy sessions remind us to assume positive intent as we muddle through years focused on jobs that will be forgotten and possessions that in a way end up possessing us.

To live assuming positive intent is a means to tamp down our automatic negativity. To assume positive intent is to consider that other people's actions are borne of positive motives. Or at the very least, the things people do or don't do could be the fruits of neutral motives.

And then something happens in our later years after some life has been lived and lessons have been taken from experiences. The lives spent fumbling yield a perspective that's realized on aged reflection. Our quality of life has by then become a little more existential and less based on achievement.

Professions and jobs are necessary and become more important as it becomes increasingly difficult to make the ends meet. But you realize there was something missing all those years you punched a clock. A day is made successful by the smiles of loved ones, a meaningful hug. The sounds of coins dropping into a paper coffee cup held by somebody on the street.

Or thinking to help an ailing fox found in your grandmother's garden.

Running the race becomes less about finishing and more about the race itself.

We get back some of what was lost from our childhood hearts. Maybe not lost. Perhaps just tucked beneath all the other things that rose in importance. It happens once in a while for some people. The ones who look hard through the murk and come up with something shiny and bright. There may even be something there so that compassion becomes empathy.