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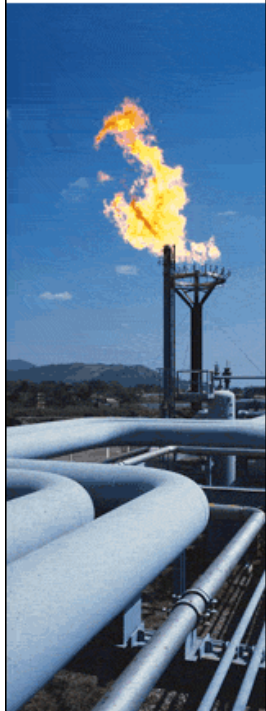
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## Lakewood student applauded for turning in \$5,000 found in prop for school play

09:19 AM CDT on Saturday, May 30, 2009

By **NANCY VISSER / The Dallas Morning News**  
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You can debate ethics in the classroom all day long, but finding \$5,000 in an old jacket used as a school stage prop is a true test of character.

India Williams, who just completed seventh grade at Lakehill Preparatory School in Dallas, found the money early this month in an old donated jacket while preparing for the middle school's production of *Guys and Dolls Jr.* She said she thought about keeping some of it, but then promptly turned it over to her music teacher.

The 12-year-old said some friends have told her that she should have kept the money, and that made her question her decision. She considered what it could have been used for – paying tuition and helping her mother with bills.

"At first I was feeling bad because I returned it, but now that this is happening, now I feel good," she said.

She's being praised by her mother, teachers, school administrators and others, including Robin Silvas of Dallas, whose late father, Ishmael Silvas, had stashed the money in the coat.

"That little girl didn't know me from Adam and she had that money and she chose to turn that money in," Silvas said. "And that's what pleased me the most about the situation. It's comforting to know that there are people out there raising their children that way."

India found the money during a May 11 dress rehearsal while looking through some old suits to find a costume for her role as a craps player.

"I saw this white envelope. I looked at it and saw writing on it. I opened it and I saw it was a bunch of hundred-dollar bills," she said. "I looked over at my friend Sydney and said I found some money. She came over and said 'Is it real?' It was real money, and right then and there I knew it wasn't anything that had to do with the school."






The school's business manager, Bruce McCoskey, had a little mystery on his hands.

The money was in a bank envelope with handwritten notes detailing the savings. The first entry was for 1998 and the last for 2003. The wallet had a handwritten ID for Ishmael Silvas, then 30 years old, and an old employee ID badge.






McCoskey tried the phone numbers and addresses and eventually found some property that had been in Ishmael Silvas' name but was now owned by his estate and his daughter. He sent Robin Silvas a letter,

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and she visited the school May 19 to claim the money.

"She said that after he died in October, they packed up his clothes and gave it to a Christian charity," McCoskey said.

Silvas said her father, a retired insurance systems analyst, grew up poor and often stashed money. He was the oldest of eight children raised by their grandparents in a little house in West Dallas. His grandfather worked for the railroad.

"He really believed in education, and he put himself through school – and he saved like crazy. But I think he was a little wary of banks, so he stuffed money everywhere for a rainy day."

After he moved from his home, his daughter found money in the floors, in pockets, in books and in envelopes.

When he died at age 68, his prized possessions went to family members. Silvas thought she had checked the pockets of the clothing she donated.

She said she's saving the money for when she really needs it. "The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree," she said.

She wrote a \$500 check for Lakehill's performing arts department. India received a \$50 reward, which she spent at Target and Plato's Closet.

Kenya Lacy said she's proud of her daughter. "People have said, 'I wouldn't have done that.' All she knew is that the money didn't belong to her."

Gigi Ekstrom, Lakehill's marketing director, said it's turned into an ethics lesson for everyone involved.

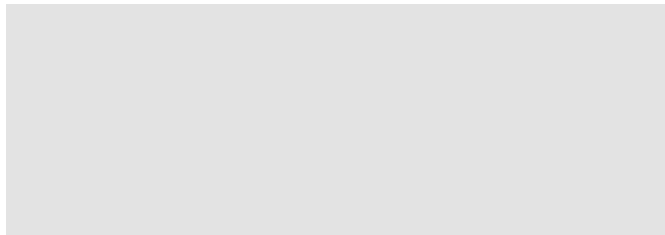
"Parents struggle with how to raise an honest kid in a dishonest world," she said. "You can ask, 'What would I do in this situation?' You know that was in the jacket for a long time and a lot people could have convinced themselves to do something different, to make a different choice."

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Stories like this make me realize that maybe our world isn't descending into the 8th circle of hell after all. Now the 2nd circle, that's another story.

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Posted by **alamographics** | 1 day ago



\$50 for a reward. Well, I suppose that's comparable to a tithe. I wonder if an attorney could chime in and make a case that the whole 5000 belonged to the school, since the item housing the money was donated to the school. Hm.



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Posted by **W from Texas** | 1 day ago



Obviously she is a Democrat. A Republican would have taken the money for drugs.



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