

I was beginning to understand that there was much more going on here than a simple police response to an unspecified disturbance at a mall.

Once the disheveled, child-like man was ready to get back on his feet again, I asked his dad, “What does Donald really like?”

“Chicken nuggets and coffee,” he replied. I turned back to Donald and slowly but excitedly asked, “How would you like your dad to take you to get some chicken nuggets and coffee, buddy?” He gave a silent nod of approval and we helped him off the ground and into the truck.

After buckling Donald in, the elderly man returned to his side of the truck with a simple expression of gratitude. He shook my hand and thanked me in a voice drained of all emotion. I shot back, “No problem, I do this for a living.”

Despite my official duties that day, I knew from experience that mostly he was thanking me because I could offer empathy and not just sympathy. Sometimes just being aware that someone else knows—I mean