

*"Wherever there's a human being,
there's an opportunity for kindness."
You don't have to plan some big event.
You can be strolling the hall in school
and say 'hi' to a stranger. Simplicity is
the way, you know?"*
— Bow, High School Student



High School Kindness

This guide shares kindness ideas from high school students and teachers.

It is a growing guide and you can send your examples of kindness to be included to: info@actsofkindness.org.

Practice Random Acts of Kindness™

The Random Acts of
Kindness™ Foundation

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1. Welcome Winter Gloves

Submitted by Anonymous, Idaho

A high school psychology teacher in Idaho purchased a pair of winter gloves for every student in her class and assigned them to find someone in their school or community who needs that pair of gloves, perhaps to keep warm or to do a job. They were to document who received the "helping hands" and why that person was chosen.

2. RAK Sightings

Submitted by Jill, Kentucky

I am a therapist in an alternative high school in Buckner, KY. The majority of kids are high school age; we have a few middle school kids. Since the first day of school, we have been recognizing Random Acts of Kindness (RAKs) observed by both students and staff. I have a large envelope outside my door that the students and staff write about the RAK that they have observed and who they observed doing the RAK.

Each morning I fill out a certificate that says: Therapeutic Hug presented to (student or staff) for (doing whatever they were seen doing). I handwrite "RAK" on the certificate and also include the date. Each morning, usually with a student, I hand out the RAKs during homeroom. We are working on printing up a new certificate (without the Therapeutic Hug part; it was all that I had at the time, and it has taken off!).

Initially, most of the notes in the envelope were written by staff members, but now the majority of them are written by students, which is really cool. Some teachers decorate the area outside their door with the certificates, some decorate a bulletin board in their room, and some of the students (and staff) hang their RAKs around their homeroom desk or on the wall near their area.

In August we handed out 111 RAKS, and in September we handed out 237, for a total of 348! Being an alternative school, we often have some really tough days (as does every school, I know), and sometimes I don't always look forward to the new days, especially after a really rough one.

But when I see all the great "little" things that are going on in other areas of the school, while I might be in crisis mode all day, it really reminds me of the big picture. I also remember that both staff and students are recognizing kindness, and there is an abundance of kind acts happening all around us here at school on a daily basis. And these are supposed to be the "difficult" kids!!

For the most part, the entire school has embraced the RAK intervention. Only one student has reacted negatively; even the toughest/hardest kids have responded well to being recognized for RAKs. Most of them aren't even aware of the RAK they are observed doing. Many of them want to know who put it in the envelope. Usually I just smile and say that I don't know (and often I don't; the notes are supposed to be anonymous).

But for the notes that are signed or if I recognize the handwriting, I often give the observer/writer a little wink to let them know that I know they just passed on the kindness by writing down their observation.

It has worked out really well for us. I think we came up with the idea from this website. It has been a lot of fun. Good luck!

3. Incognito Students For RAK

Submitted by Chad, high school student, Alabama

We usually try to make the day of a person who is down better. We usually know what is going on because we have a small high school of about 500 people including staff.

We give cards on everyone's birthday and give gifts, such as candles and other neat things to students and teachers having a rough time.

Our latest gift was to a teacher that is having a baby and was put on bed rest. We gave her and a husband a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

We sign everything we give "RAK." No one knows what that means, and suspense is building at Deshler High School. The cool thing is no one knows who is in it, either. We even have our own hand signals and handshake; it is so much fun.

We learned about RAK from a cool teacher, Mrs. Turner. It is our third block class that started it, and so far, that is all that is in it.

4. RAK Week: A Student's Perspective

Submitted by Jeff, high school student

I had never heard of Random Acts of Kindness Week until I joined the Students Against Prejudice club at Wichita East High. I was really excited about doing a good deed for someone, and I sat in my desk in fifth hour thinking of all the things I wanted to do for my other schoolmates. Then I thought, if I am here thinking of what I am going to do for someone, then it defeats the whole purpose of the random part of Random Acts of Kindness. So I thought to myself, I will just do something for someone when I feel the opportunity presents itself. I told myself that I wasn't going to even think about it until the week came.

When school let out, my mother picked me up, and we had to stop for gas before we headed home. I saw my mom get out of the car, but she wasn't going towards the gas pump. I wondered what she was up to. My mom had walked across the parking lot to help an elderly lady who had dropped her cane but couldn't get it because her other hand was full with a twelve-pack of soda. My mother offered to put the soda in her car and help her with her cane. The elderly lady obliged and they said their thanks. And that was it, all done. I was so surprised because I hadn't told my mom about Random Acts of Kindness Week yet, and she was the one off doing something kind.

I thought that it was so awesome to see my mom, whom I look up to, do a Random Act of Kindness and see the lady be so willing. When my mom got back in the car, I told her about what our school was doing, and she thought that Random Acts of Kindness Week was an extremely neat idea. I also told her that what she did was really sweet and that I looked up to her for doing that.

What really blew my mind was that the sweet, fragile lady trusted my mother, a complete stranger, to put the soda in her car. I don't see that every day because so many people are wary about strangers and won't accept help that is being offered.

When Random Acts of Kindness Week came, I was so excited. The first random thing I did was to hug a friend. My friend asked me what the hug was for, and I just replied, "Does a hug need a reason? Why can't it just be random and from the heart?" My friend told me that she never thought of it that way. I learned that in order for Random Acts of Kindness Week to work for me, I needed to step outside myself and think of others and enjoy the time I spend with them. I really came out of my comfort zone during the week, and I also made a few new friends! So Random Acts of Kindness Week was really a two-in-one deal! By being kind, I was rewarded with hugs, new friends, and the feeling a person gets when they give for no reason. Let me tell you, that week was something else!

Each day of the week, our school—a diverse school of 2,200 students—did something innovative to show our dedication towards RAK Week. Monday consisted of getting the word out and just telling students and faculty about Random Acts of Kindness. Tuesday was Say Hi To a Stranger Day, and Wednesday was Hug a Friend Day. A lot of students started to get the "flow" of Random Acts of Kindness Week. Thursday was Donate Money To a Cause Day. I decided to buy lunch for a friend who was broke and hungry at the time. It felt good to give, even if it wasn't that much.

Friday was the best day of all. It was Make a New Friend Day. I sat in our school library to work on homework, and this girl came and sat right across from me. I thought that it was sort of awkward because there were plenty of seats all around us, but she chose the seat right across from me. After a few minutes of eerie silence, we both began to open up and start what was not known at the time to be an amazing conversation. I thought to myself, how cool it was that two complete strangers could have so much in common.

We got so caught up in our conversation that we didn't even hear the bell to class. We were astonished by how fast the time seemed to fly right by. Before we went our separate ways, we ended the conversation with saying how extremely neat it was that we had created a brand new friendship in such a short time. I was late to my next hour and she was also, but it was a small price to pay for such an amazing new friendship. It seemed like our school came together and almost everyone had done at least one Random Act of Kindness before the week was over.

When a person experiences that brief shining moment where they go beyond what is expected of them and do something for another person for no reason other than love, then that is the best emotion a person can feel. One unique thing about these deeds is that they are unconditional. This means that regardless of what someone might have done to you or might not have done for you, the kind act will still exist. That is what I believed Random Acts of Kindness was all about.

When the week was over, I asked myself, why do we only have one week of Random Acts of Kindness? It should be every day! So I have decided to do Random Acts of Kindness whenever and wherever.

5. Learning About Random Acts of Kindness

Submitted by Martin Kimeldorf, Washington

Dear Instructor,

Here is some material I developed for Valentine's week and Random Acts of Kindness Week. You may freely distribute this material as long as you do not alter the content of this document. Herein you will find background material and four exercises or mini-lessons designed to promote empathy and foster a sense of community service. I generally require the first two lessons and make the last two optional.

- Martin Kimeldorf

INTRODUCING THE CONCEPT OF RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

I recommend that you get a copy of the book *Random Acts Of Kindness* (Editors of Conari Press, 1993. Berkeley, CA). Set the stage by reading examples of the Random Acts of Kindness illustrated in the book. This can be followed by a discussion of the following question and the background material related to volunteerism in America. Some background material follows; after this, you'll find four exercises.

Questions for Discussion

- 1) What is your definition of kindness?
- 2) Have you ever felt disappointed or cheated because you did something nice for another person, but he or she did not return the favor?
- 3) If you expect to get something back, are you then performing a kind act or are you really trading favors for favors?
- 4) Re-tune your definition of kindness.
- 5) Has anyone ever done something for you anonymously, without expecting something in return?
- 6) Do one generous act each day and then write down how you feel afterwards.

BACKGROUND-SAMPLES FROM VOLUNTEERISM IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Many people believe that young people volunteering - these "habits of the heart" - are deeply rooted in the American community's volunteer spirit or frontier tradition of help-your-neighbor.

The observation by the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville over 150 years ago is often cited as an example. He felt that the strength of our democratic institutions lay in the citizens' habit of getting involved through our uniquely American "voluntary associations."

A brief summary of volunteering and serving in America will reveal the depth of this experience:

Colonial Period Through 1700s

Town meetings began in New England and set an example for citizen involvement. The Quakers developed a plan for responding to the needs of the poor. The American Revolution was fought by volunteer army. One example of "youth service" includes children making bandages. During the 1700s, youth were often recipients of volunteer-driven social reforms (free school societies, local public health boards, labor unions, and aid societies).

1800s

In the 19th century, voluntary associations flourished and became more organized, especially in urban areas. Examples of these include the Temperance Crusade of 1830s, Volunteer Health Boards working on epidemics, and fraternal organizations supporting orphanages and poor houses. Civic groups with a service emphasis evolved: American Red Cross, settlement houses, B'nai B'rith, boys clubs, YMCAs and YWCAs, Travelers Aid Society, and PTAs. Abolitionists relied on young people to help gather support.

1900s

In the early 20th century, the social reform movement resulted in the creation of the Children's Bureaus, Urban League, Goodwill Industries, 4-H in rural areas, Scouts, etc. In the early part of the century, William James described service as the "moral equivalent of war." In 1918, William Kilpatrick advocated experiential learning outside of school. During the 1930s, the Progressive Movement advocated using education as a tool of social transformation. At mid-century (1940s to 60s), private foundations and peace crusades surfaced. During the 1950s, Eisenhower advocated volunteerism through The Citizenship Education Project. In the 1960s, Kennedy's "New Frontier" campaign ushered in programs like VISTA and Peace Corps, and grassroots involvement with social activities, civil rights, labor reform for migrant workers, consumer rights, urban renewal, and the peace movement.

In the 1970s, several national reports encouraged service as a way of broadening the range of people young adults interact with and as way to reconnect with community. In the 1980s, President Reagan advocated volunteerism. and President Bush promoted a Thousand Points of Light. Several states created initiatives for funding, planning, and encouraging service while Congress debated

national service and service corps options. School reformers (Foxfire: Eliot Wigginton, A Place Called School by John Goodlad, Student Service: The New Carnegie Unit, W.T. Grant Foundation reports) encouraged the use of Service Learning and community service in school programs. In November 1990, President Bush signed the National and Community Service Act of 1990. (19)
-Excerpted from "Imagine" (a report on community service by Martin Kimeldorf)

EXERCISE #1-WHY PEOPLE ARE DOING RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

An entire movement has been created around people doing kind things as individuals rather than as members of a group. It could mean walking down the street and plugging parking meters as Janyce Mose does in Olympia, Washington. Perhaps one day you pass out pencils to students in your class. Someone is doing a report and you see a television show he or she could use, so you call. These are all little, unselfish acts that make our work less hostile and more hospitable. And the good news is, it probably makes you feel good doing them. The following passage is my opinion of how Random Acts of Kindness fits into our world today.

We live in a world where so much is uncertain. Nature's random floods and earthquakes destroy homes and entire communities in a flash. Drive-by gangster shootings terrorize entire neighborhoods. These random acts of violence douse hope, call forth anger, and destroy all that is good in us.

When you are uncertain if you can combat this pervasive misery, when you are unsure of what to do next, when you don't know who is on your side-stand up and do the unthinkable! Contribute a random act of kindness, and in the doing, stake out a small part of the planet that looks forward to your presence.

When you buy an ice cream cone for the kid who just dropped his chocolate scoop, you buy more than ice cream. If you are in a long line of cars and you let someone turn in from a side street, you momentarily turn the asphalt jungle into a safe haven. Letting the stranger behind you (with only one package) go first in the grocery line means there are fewer strangers in the world at that moment. When you take a bunch of pink carnations on a cold winter's day to the elderly widow at the end of the block, you treat yourself to wisdom beyond your years. And if you take the time to leave a message on a phone machine to cheer up a depressed person, you put a human face on the technology that surrounds (and sometimes threatens) us.

In the process of acting compassionately, you change life for yourself as well as others. You give yourself the power to be a hero, to experience a divine and cleansing moment of unselfishness. For that brief instant, you crash through the darkness of cruelty, ignorance, and mistrust which daily threatens to engulf us.

These Random Acts of Kindness may not end racial hatred, droughts, or murders. But they do throw a counter weight onto the scales where we measure our worth each day. At the end of the day, you'll know one thing for sure: you chose not to live in the world as it is, but rather as you would like it to be." - Martin Kimeldorf

This is my personal journal entry after reading *Random Acts Of Kindness*.

Samples of Random Acts of Kindness

Look over the following samples based on suggestions in the book *Random Acts Of Kindness*. Then make a list of ten random acts you could perform in your life at home, at school, or in the community at large.

- Leave a small gift at the door of a family suffering severe illness, like cancer.
- Pick out some place or object to improve. Clear out a vacant lot and plant trees and shrubs, straighten a street sign, or re-paint a bus stop.
- Return your shopping cart to the storage area.
- Turn in items to be recycled.
- Write a note to a teacher, thanking him or her for a lesson.
- Select a person in your neighborhood or class who is feeling down. Send that person a greeting card anonymously.
- If you've been a jerk (for instance, if you got into a name calling situation and lost control), apologize, even if the other person is wrong.
- Take birdseed in a small pouch and spread it where you see our feather friends congregating.
- Visit an animal shelter and bring some treats for the animals and the staff.

- Do a job (like mowing the lawn, cleaning the house, or shoveling snow) for someone who is having hard times, and surprise him or her by not charging.
- Take another student to the library with you and help him or her get started on a school report.
- Send a letter to someone (like a teacher or coach) who made a difference in your life.
- Let the impatient person behind you go ahead of you in line.
- Bake cookies or another treat, and give them away at school or at work.
- Bring pencils to school and give them away to people who forget to bring one.
- Slip some money into the pocket of a needy friend.
- Buy a movie ticket for the person behind you in line.
- Reverse roles. Do something for others who usually do something for you. Clean up the living room, make breakfast on Sunday, or do the laundry.

Your List of Possible Random Acts

Create a list of ten Random Acts of Kindness that might interest you. What could you do for classmates, people you see everyday, neighbors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, even strangers?

EXERCISE #2-JOURNAL REFLECTIONS ABOUT PERFORMING COMPASSIONATE ACTS

Perform at least five Random Acts of Kindness. In a journal, document the following for each random act of kindness. Decorate this journal page and turn it in. It will be posted on the wall.

- a) what you did
- b) how others felt (or how you think they felt)
- c) how you felt afterwards

EXERCISE #3-CONSIDER THE IMPACT ON YOUR HEALTH

It has been shown that doing "for others" can benefit the volunteer as much as the recipient. Read the following quotes to understand how this could happen. Then, answer the question at the end.

From High School Student #1

I got involved after I was required by the court to do community service. Funny thing is, I was good at it. In fact, my supervisor asked me to stay on and start a program to get other youth involved. They gave me a desk, a phone, and a small budget. I started a phone bank where neighbors could call in to get some help with chores they were unable to do themselves. Most of the requests came from elderly people and single parents. I believe that youth can make a difference if we work together. In the end, I realized that I am not a bad person, and I am capable of incredible things if I take advantage of the freedom within myself. By giving away my time and myself, I got back a whole lot.

From High School Student #2

Whenever my buddy (a child at the family shelter) knows that I am coming to see her, she waits at a certain corner. As soon as she sees me, she runs to me and gives me a huge hug. I can relate to the relationship I have with my buddy because I had no brothers or sisters, and when I was young my father traveled 70% of the year. I would have really valued a relationship similar to the one my buddy and I have. My buddy is not the only one benefiting from this program. I also feel needed and appreciated.

From a College Student

The organization I work in, Deaf Access Anonymous, provides information and access to twelve-step recovery programs for hearing impaired individuals. Our goal is to raise money to hire the services of interpreters to allow these men and women the opportunity to participate in group meetings and related activities.

The benefits I personally received from volunteering have been ten-fold. I could never have imagined how much I would get back from giving of my time and ideas. I am in recovery myself, and helping others helps me to stay clean and sober. When I reach out a helping hand to someone else, I receive help in return. When I am at a DAA meeting, giving information on the TDD, making phone calls to raise money, or just telling someone about our organization, I take the focus off myself.

Other gifts from my volunteer work are the opportunity to practice and learn sign language, learn more about deaf culture, and meet deaf individuals. I am currently taking the prerequisite classes for the Interpreter Training Program at SCCC. Had I known all the unbelievably good things that would come my way when I quit drinking and drugging, I might have stopped long ago! Life is so much richer when you give some of what you have away.

From *Write To The Core* (about journal writing)

Many people who volunteer are described as altruistic. In that larger sense, they work from their hearts first. In the magazine *American Health*, Alan Luks and Eileen Growald speak convincingly about the health benefits of altruism and volunteering. In the article "Beyond Self" they cite evidence in various studies, which reveal that men who volunteered had longer life expectancies than those who did not volunteer. Even people who simply viewed movies showing altruistic acts displayed an improved immune response. All of this research lead the authors to conclude that our evolution or biology has lead us down a path where our individual health is tied to our collective health. In other words, we are dependent on interacting with others, and volunteering is one of the highest quality interactions one can engage in. When you help others, you engage in another form of health - building community wellness.

Conversely, people who are cut off from others experience increased rates of illness. Other studies revealed that women living in isolation had more health problems. In other words, people need people for their health.

In 1 or 2 paragraphs, tell why you agree or disagree about the following statement:
Performing Random Acts of Kindness or volunteerism may make me feel better or help me to live longer and happier.

EXERCISE #4-THINKING BIG

Pick a quote which best describes your feeling about doing a Random Act of Kindness. Then tell why you picked it. Explain what it means to you.

- We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give. -Winston Churchill
- I am certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we, too, will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battle or in politics but for our contributions to the human spirit. -John Kennedy
- Our culture is at a critical cusp-a time that requires that we define what it means to be a citizen in a democracy. Within our nation we need to foster a greater sense of collective responsibility. -Robert Bellah (author)
- For whatever befalls the Earth, befalls the sons and daughters of the Earth...Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. -Chief Seattle
- Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve -Martin Luther King

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Martin Kimeldorf has been active in service learning, teaching, and writing. His books include *The Grandfriends Project, A Program Creating Friendships Across The Generations* and *Gourmet Aging*.

6. Meridian's RAK Week Activities

Submitted by Sherry, Mississippi

We had a RAK week with "Fill the Halls with Words of Kindness" at Meridian High School. I downloaded lots of useful stuff and created even more. We flew our Kindness Flag High during RAK week.

We had: a Kindness essay, poem and song contest. We received some great essays and one really great poem. Also a: "How many words can you make from the letters in the word Kindness? contest." The winner made 43 words.

Our prize patrol was on the lookout for kind words and acts to reward. They handed out 15 kindness certificates.

Several teachers and classes displayed words of kindness in our halls. And we posted words of kindness in three languages on our walls.

We had a great week. Kindness is still alive in Meridian, MS. All here feel that the week was a great success. Our violence rate was down during this week

7. Graduating with Kindness and Safety

Submitted by Mary, Washington

My daughter graduated last year and, as parents, we were concerned about the post-graduation parties. Our town took the matter seriously and provided a party for the graduates. We used the school and had parent volunteers to stay up all night with the young adults. The cafeteria was open season and the gym was theirs. Entertainment was provided and sponsored by local businesses. We had a few rules and guidelines:

1. If you leave early, your parents will be called so they know you're on the way.
2. If you stayed until 6 AM, you received \$50 (donation from community).
3. Prizes were given away on the hour (donation from community).

The event was a success - it was safe and somewhat sane. Many of the teens commented that it was the best memory of their life. My daughter is still telling stories about the party that we all want to hear!

8. Backpacks for the Homeless

Submitted by Anonymous

At my old high school, we made up back packs for the homeless. We packed toothbrushes and toothpaste, soap, warm socks, and deodorant - basically stuff that we take for granted. We had the students bring in anything they thought would be a good item, even the little shampoo bottles from hotels. We also packed a blanket and a lunch in the backpack and went around downtown passing them out. It was great to see everyone's reaction. I think this is an easy way to contribute. Most people have old backpacks lying around, or an extra bar of soap. It adds up to a great difference.

9. UNITY Club

Submitted by Beth, Texas

Hello, I am the Sponsor of the UNITY Club at a High School in San Antonio, Texas. This holiday season we helped sponsor 18 needy families along with our faculty, other student organizations, and our PTA at our school. We adopted the families and gave each family member a personal gift as well as a gift certificate to their favorite store. Also, each of the families received a precooked holiday meal from our local grocery store. The families were chosen because they were in need of assistance (several Katrina families, several families where there was a critically ill family member or perhaps a recent death of a student's parent, or extreme financial need).

During the course of the year the UNITY club has sponsored Random Acts of Kindness week where we helped host Mr. Darrell Scott (the father of Rachel Scott, the first student killed in the Columbine, Colorado tragedy), to come speak to our students in three assemblies. Next semester, we plan on visiting our "feeder Middle School" to present a "bully proofing" program to the younger students.

We also plan to continue holding our twice a year UNITY conference where we invite various students to attend an all day conference focused on making our campus a more welcoming place to go to school. We enjoy your RAK column and use many of the quotes as openers for our meetings.

10. RAK Week in Florida

Submitted by Marcia, Florida

I sponsor the peer counseling program at our local high school. My peer counseling are hosting a RAK Week. Every peer counselor and staff member receives a "warm fuzzy" necklace which is composed of small strings of yarn in a ball (easily made) to wear around the neck. Throughout the week, they pass out "warm fuzzies" as an act of kindness to anyone who looks like they might need some positive strokes.

We are also recognizing any student who a staff member recommends for committing an RAK (certificate and prize given). Also, peer counselors will be wearing paper hot air balloon necklaces on the last day of RAK Week to "Give someone a lift." They need to commit a RAK to someone and pass the necklace on to that person to "pay the kindness forward" to another person and so on. The last person (four on a balloon) returns the necklace to peer counseling for a treat.

The students really enjoy these activities.

11. ?

Submitted by YOU???

Submit your own high school kindness ideas and experiences for this document via e-mail to info@actsofkindness.org. Please specify that the activity is for high schoolers.

**Practice Random Acts
of Kindness™**