

From educators  
and community  
members  
involved in  
Random Acts  
of Kindness

## RAK TESTIMONIALS

✦ "Just wanted to let you know that kindness is spreading here at our Middle School. To prove that, I have 14 Acts of Kindness slips sitting here. In one day, that many students got "caught." I really feel like your presentation motivated our students and opened up their minds.

"Thanks so much for taking the time to share your experiences and outlook with us. I truly feel like it's already making a difference in our school. I hope you are getting settled in your new space, Thanks again!" —Maureen (Denver)

✦ "I am fascinated by this website as it contains gems of thoughts leading people to be kind to his/her fellow human beings.

"In this world of selfishness, hatred, revenge kindness is medicine. My hearty congrats to you for offering this website." —Bro. Arockiam

✦ "As Director of Pupil Services at Tapestry Charter School in Buffalo New York (grades K-6), I am always searching for ideas to promote positive relationships in our school community. I have developed a program that incorporates Random Act of Kindness' ideas as an important part of these programs.

"Your site offers some wonderful ideas that are easily incorporated into these other programs. I wanted to thank you for the many wonderful ideas from your site that have directly helped to create all these programs at our school." —Susan Gillick, Ph.D.

✦ "I feel that your Random Acts of kindness site fuels the fire inside us all. We are mothers, sisters and teachers that feel our footsteps are placed in a manner that allows the strong to take charge." —Mary

✦ "I have shared your website info with teachers at a workshop I gave in December." —Miriam

✦ "It was holiday here in Japan and by chance I got connected linked with your website. I started reading each and every word on this site and time lapsed very fast. I must say that you deserve some kind of award for having such a beautiful website.

"I myself learned a lot from your site. Thanks" —Ari (Japan)

Practice Random Acts  
of Kindness™

The Random Acts of  
Kindness™ Foundation

1727 Tremont Place  
Denver, CO 80202  
800-660-2811

Fax: 303-297-2919

[info@actsofkindness.org](mailto:info@actsofkindness.org)

[www.actsofkindness.org](http://www.actsofkindness.org)

✦ “Thank you for sending me KindTimes--it is terrific. I love the layout, graphics and great vignettes. Interestingly, a friend of ours who just visited from Atlanta told us excitedly about the article in [Delta Airline’s] *Sky Magazine*. I just knew that it would spark even greater interest! Way to go!

“I also love the Kids Kindness Calendar--a great teaching resource!

“What a great resource your website is--you have everything there. I love referring teachers to your site!” —Debbie (Canada)

✦ “I am so impressed with your website and stories that I would like to know if it is acceptable for me to link to you from our website. Thank you!” —Teresa (Florida)

✦ “Thank you so much for inspiring me with so many excellent quotes! When I first came here, I was just looking for a simple quote for Public Speaking class. After looking at several, I felt overwhelmed by happiness that I didn’t know could be achieved by simple things.

“I plan to be the future president and try and spread peace to other nations. Thank you once again!” —Matt

✦ “The RAK Foundation website was a life saver this year. I did not decide to do all this until the Thursday before RAK Week. I got wonderful ideas and downloaded a lot of material from there.” —Sherry (Mississippi)

✦ “Thank you for the bookmarks on your website. I’ve printed a million (I’m stretching the truth) to hand out to random people. Going to enclose them in see-through Contact paper to increase their usefulness. Thanks again, love your site, it makes my day!” —Barbara

## **SURVEY: EDUCATORS’ RESPONSES**

We circulated a survey to a few of our educators. Their responses help us understand the practical aspects — as well as the benefits — of teaching kindness. Excerpts follow:

### **1. Why would teachers want kindness activities or a kindness program in their school?**

✦ “It is easy to teach a student who has a good attitude. Kindness activities help to improve student’s attitudes. In a classroom where kindness is emphasized and unkindness is not tolerated, students feel free to ask questions.” —Sherry, MS

✦ “An emphasis on kindness in a classroom or school creates a more positive school culture, where peace prevails so that learning can be fostered.” —Carol, HI

✦ “Kindness provides a better community of learners. A teacher can do a lot to change the social culture of a classroom and a school. When the entire community values kindness, then it becomes the norm.” —Lisa, CO

✦ “Schools need to have environments which encourage risk taking among their students. I’m not talking about dangerous activities, but whenever learning takes place students need to feel as if their ideas, thoughts, and struggles will be met with encouragement, support and understanding.

“Kindness activities/programs are a positive step in improving the emotional climate of a classroom and school. Bringing kindness to the awareness and conscious level in chil-

dren and staff members helps create an atmosphere conducive to learning.” —Peter, NM

✦ “Teachers may use these activities to meet service learning projects, to be a part of their social studies curriculum, to bring school and community together, to bring students together, or to change the image of the school or kids.” —Patrick, PA

✦ “Teachers teach kindness to make students more aware of how their kindness has a positive effect on our community and society.” —Rita, CO

## **2. What does kindness do for students themselves? Has kindness affected the emotional climate at your school, and if so, how?**

✦ “Students and teachers have noticed more and more that we are responding with kindness, not anger and violence.” —Sherry, MS

✦ “As with adults, there is a feeling of altruism one gets when one extends a kindness to someone else. Children can learn this behavior, and teachers are positively reinforcing the students’ good behaviors. An important element is time for students to reflect on their action — both bad and good. All of this awareness makes for a better classroom climate.” —Cheryl, NY

✦ “Kindness activities make students more aware of kindness, both the kind things that they do and the things that others do. This awareness really contributes to a positive social climate. Kindness becomes something that is expected and valued.” —Lisa, CO

✦ “Kind deeds help empower children. Elementary children, needing concrete examples for learning to take place, get to see a direct connection between their deeds and the reactions of others. Children increase their belief in themselves and feel a greater connection to others when they see how their actions positively impact people and places.

“How I wish I could do some study about the emotional climate before and after RAK week. It is almost as if a burdensome weight is lifted, not only from students but teachers as well. There seems to be more laughter coming out of the teachers’ lounge. There is more unity, less gossip, more openness and honesty. There seems to be a pulling together of everyone working toward our unified goals, objectives and mission.

“Our RAK activities strongly encourage teachers and students to work together and this has an impact on children feeling safer around our school. There are more smiling, patient, and kindhearted children.” —Peter, NM

✦ “Kindness generates pride, a sense of accomplishment, a ‘Hey look what we did’ feeling. It also helps to form and strengthen bonds.” —Patrick, PA

✦ “Kindness helps students feel good about themselves as the giver or receiver; it promotes positive self-esteem. It’s empowering to know that you can make a difference.” —Rita, CO

✦ “Teachers want a kindness program in school because it motivates positive behavior in a positive way. Students are often told the ‘terrible’ consequences of their behavior. This reverses that process; it puts the responsibility on the children and rewards them from the beginning.

“Kindness instills self-confidence in children. They are able to succeed. Success in any form breeds success. Urban children have little of this, so this program is important. Kindness builds self-esteem. It provides the student with an opportunity to feel pride in who they are and in what they do.

“The kindness program focused the student body and forced the teachers to address positive behavior. Because of our method of earning cards, the only behavior that became important was good behavior — kindness. Therefore, the problems became almost nonexistent. Students didn’t have time to act up.” —Janice, NJ

### **3. Why did you decide to get involved with kindness?**

✦ "Several years ago I became concerned about the way students put each other down. I really liked what RAK stood for." —Sherry, MS

✦ "I decided to get involved because the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation speaks to my heart." —Janice, NJ

✦ "I saw kids being ostracized and bullied all the time, and yet when I had heart-to-heart talks with kids about this, nobody was happy with it. The students themselves wanted to change. They wanted to see if their kind acts would make a difference, and they really felt they did." —Lisa, CO

✦ "Kindness tied in with the curriculum and with my own value system." —Cheryl, NY

✦ "I've always believed that setting up a positive, supportive classroom environment is a key to successful teaching and learning. Kindness activities have become a big part of establishing this atmosphere in my school.

✦ "Recently there has been some brain research pointing out the impact of kind deeds and certain chemicals being released in the brain that may enhance children." —Peter, NM

✦ "I decided to get involved with kindness because it is the foundation of what a safe community is based on." —Rita, CO

✦ "There are many reasons...and being involved with kindness has also helped me grow as a person." —Carol, HI

### **4. How easy or difficult was it for you to incorporate kindness into your curriculum or school(s)?**

✦ "The hardest part was getting started and setting aside the time. Once this became a priority and I took the first steps, everything else seemed to fall into place. When I went to others with specific ideas and specific requests for help, many were willing to lend a hand." —Peter, NM

✦ "The administration and staff have supported and encouraged me. Recently our district has established a character education program that incorporates all of our kindness activities." —Sherry, MS

✦ "Students, teachers, and the community planned together so that incorporation was not a chore." —Pat, PA

✦ "I think more teachers need to be made aware of the information they can access through the Random Acts of Kindness Foundation. I plan to make an effort to get the information to them this year, perhaps through the teacher's union." —Carol, HI

✦ "Easy enough. I had the support of administration, and other teachers saw the value and joined in." —Cheryl, NY

✦ "It was easy. Parents, administrators, and students were all very excited to try some new ideas related to kindness. In one language arts class, I carefully planned writing assignments around our kindness idea to further enhance the academic aspect of this project and also allow kids the time to reflect on it and discuss it." —Lisa, CO

✦ "I used the materials from the RAK website, gave my students journals, and began." —Janice, NJ

### **5. How have kindness activities been received by students, by other teachers, and by administrators?**

✦ "Overwhelmingly, mainly because we made it easy by having ideas and materials ready to go for a school-wide project." —Cheryl, NY

✦ "I think everyone values these activities towards making the school and community more caring and conducive to learning." —Carol, HI

✦ "I'm fortunate that each principal I've worked with has thrown 100% support behind our RAK Week activities because they see and have heard the positive impact it produces

in our school. We implement activities that aren't too time consuming or overwhelming for the teachers, yet are meaningful enough so they become vested in the projects. RAK Week has become one of the highlights at my past school. Once posters and announcements go up signaling the approach of RAK Week, children become excited. Parents, too, have had nothing but positive comments." —Peter, NM

✦ "Very well. The entire community has encouraged the students to do this." —Lisa, CO

✦ "All the activities have been received well. The organized activities had inspired many random acts of kindness. We always have more participation than I can even imagine. Most years I never buy enough ribbon or order enough materials. Teachers are glad to help." —Sherry, MS

✦ "I can't explain enough the importance of this program. The title alone — kindness — has an enormous impact. This program took an urban school and raised the self-esteem and attitude of 820 students. We had students who had refused to come to school start attending because they said 'they could be kind' and they wanted to earn their cards."

—Janice, NJ

## **6. Has there been any community outreach from your school, or community involvement with your school, as a result of kindness activities?**

✦ "We established a network and a partnership with the local senior center." —Patrick, PA

✦ "Last year I connected different organizations in our school with community groups. I asked for volunteers and called the community groups to see what we could do for them." [The students did acts of kindness for the police, veterans, National Guard members serving in Afghanistan, Navy and Marine personnel, firefighters, and emergency response personnel.] —Sherry, MS

✦ "The importance of a program like this in an urban district such as ours is multi-faceted. Our area is in the process of redevelopment. The poor people feel as if they no longer count. Their self-esteem has been beaten down over and over again. This program, through their children, gave the parents the courage to feel good, to feel proud, to feel that there was meaning in the changing world around them. The parents helped their children become aware of kind acts, gave them hints on how they could help, how they could be kind. The redevelopment of our area is not in the real estate, but in the parents of our students." —Janice, NJ

✦ "Each class that participates adopts a local agency on the pueblo (e.g., police department, social service agency, fire department) and does a kind deed for those workers during RAK Week. Because our schools have traditionally had difficulty getting positive press, this has been a big boost. Children feel a closer connection to other positive role models in the community, and outside community resources seem more willing to come do presentations to our students as a result. The parents in our community seem to love the fact that the school is doing something for the community." —Peter, NM

## **7. Other thoughts or comments:**

✦ "This movement grows each year. This week I am planning how staff and students can honor those who lost their lives on 9/11, their families, and those heroes who tried to rescue them. We are also honoring community people who are recognized as persons of outstanding character." —Sherry, MS

✦ "Our RAK activities last year in Albuquerque went over so well and generated such positive press coverage that I've had a few people I've never met call up to ask what we're doing this year." —Peter, NM

✦ "I think it is very easy to incorporate this type of program into schools and very necessary, given our current state of the world." —Lisa, CO

**One teacher's experience:**

"I think that first year, students in my classroom did 700 acts of kindness during RAK Week. The following year I opened it up to the school and invited anyone who wanted to participate. Not many teachers participated, but students came to me from other classrooms to participate in this project.

"The third year I planned a school-wide RAK Week. I worked with 820 students and created a 1080-link chain of kindness. At that point, teachers saw what an impact it had on the students and wanted to get involved. We will do it again this year.

"Our conflict resolution program and our kindness program have been responsible for our discipline problems dropping nearly 70%.

"Kindness activities are now embraced by 90% of the teachers. Administrators and students, of course, embrace the program. The community celebrated the success of the program by broadcasting it on the local cable channel. Newspapers both local and city embraced the program. The mayor and council members all expressed pride in our accomplishments.

The other district schools have contacted me to participate in the kindness program for this year." —Janice, NJ

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