

Paying It Forward Pays Back

“Karma.” “You reap what you sow.” “What goes around comes around.” We all know the meaning to these expressions is mutual: the actions you take today could very well influence your future situation. In writing “Project Kindness” for the May/June issue of *Her Voice*, an article about carrying out random acts of kindness to people in my community in an effort to spark people to pay it forward, I never expected to feel rewarded in return. The recipients’ smiles were heartwarming; their surprised faces a pure delight to see. This was all the reassurance I needed to see that my mission was accomplished.

Those acts and the publication of that issue of *Her Voice* seemed to trigger a few thoughtful deeds in the community. A “Letter to the Editor” in the *Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan* caught my eye. Someone was thanking the kindhearted person who paid for supper for her and her family at a restaurant and assured she would “pay it forward.” I received a touching phone message from a stranger. A *Her Voice* reader enjoyed my story and wanted to let me know that she felt like she found a new friend. Thrilled by the compliment, I saw it the other way around as I was the one who gained a friend. Inspired to do her own random act of kindness, my mom bought coffees for our office on National Coffee Day. What a great way to celebrate!

The happy responses to my pay it forward

efforts stuck with me. I began to crave kindness like I do coffee; for those of you who know me know that this is serious stuff. I enjoyed seeing people happy and wanted to make that a part of my day, every day and I didn’t want to stop trying to continue the trend. Several people helped me in gathering food and supplies for the Yankton Humane Society. I sent out thank you notes to some special people in my life, baked goods for fundraisers, held doors open, doled out smiles and compliments as much as possible. My senses gradually became more and more attentive to the opportunities to be helpful.

It’s so easy to get caught up in the hurry and scurry of the daily shuffle, but if you can pause for a minute and take in what is going on around you, there is an abundance of kindness. People hold doors open for others; folks smile, wave and chat with strangers and employees while shopping; school bus drivers wave cheerfully; businesses hold food and coat drives; donations are made to various fundraisers and motorists often move over in busy traffic to let others in. We really live in a great community, full of considerate, kindhearted people. We are lucky.

The acts of kindness stories that people shared with me in the months after my article are what truly warmed my soul. I heard of various acts performed: extra tips to the baristas at the coffee shop, providing food for a homeless person, buying lunch for a



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