

## ❖ PAYING IT FORWARD

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soldier, taking some time during a coffee stop to listen to a lonely gentleman's story, sending cards to friends and neighbors to let them know they're cared about, donating money to the Salvation Army and donating toys to the Toys for Tots program. Others took time to help ring the bell with the Salvation Army, donated Christmas gifts to a family in need, helped the Big Friend/Little Friend Program, helped pay for someone's groceries when they were short cash, sent random Christmas cards to recovering soldiers at an Army Medical Center.

As our lives return back to normal after the rush of the holiday season leaves our heads, we cram the holiday decorations back into their totes and settle back in to the comfort of the humdrum daily routine. We swear we'll start a new diet and exercise program on Monday, after we finish off this last batch of delicious Christmas fudge. New Year's Resolutions are fresh in our minds; if you haven't made one yet surely you've thought about it or have been asked if you've considered anything. There's the usual resolutions, eat right, exercise, quit smoking, save money, stress less, play more. How about trying a resolution that can help you and others at the same time? Call it "Resolution Kindness." Consider performing one small random act of kindness every single day. Sound overwhelming? Why not try it for a few days. Those days might turn into weeks, those weeks spread out to months and before you know it you've poured your kindness into a full year! I'm committed to give this a try for my new year's resolution. I've scoured the internet for hundreds of kind acts, from the effortless to those requiring a bit of time or a just a little money. Optimistic, I am hopeful that I will stick with this one much longer than previous resolutions, at least until April.

Simple actions like paying someone a compliment, smiling or talking to a stranger, saying thank you, letting someone cut in line, holding the door open for someone or fully listening with no distractions to more challenging deeds like sending cards or notes, paying for someone's coffee or lunch, calling loved ones, donating time or even money where needed can make a huge impact on someone else's day. Their spirits uplifted, they pay it forward by doing a good deed for someone else and this continues as the compassion becomes contagious. Imagine the effects if a kindness

outbreak swept through the community, and then further beyond.

A cup of coffee for a stranger, a note for a former teacher, a smile, a hug, a gentle touch; one simple act of kindness can do so much. Blessings come in packages of all shapes and all sizes and can answer someone's prayers. May your acts of kindness warm your heart as much as it will theirs.

❖ *By Julie Eickhoff*



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