Random Acts of Kindness

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International Random Acts of Kindness (RAK) week is February 9-15, 2015. This is a time when we are called on to be kind and thoughtful to people without an underlying reason and without the expectation of that kindness being returned to us. What should this mean to the students, educators and staff at A&M-Commerce?

Research on RAK shows that it should mean a lot! Studies are revealing that simply witnessing an act of kindness can create a “warm, elevated feeling” and a renewed faith in the goodness of human nature. (Steve Taylor, PhD).

Try to recall the last time you saw someone go out of their way to be kind or helpful to someone they didn’t know. Did you see a shopper spontaneously offer to help an older person carry their parcels to the car? Or a passer-by stop to help someone rescue a wayward pet from the road? Or perhaps you saw someone offer a kind word to a stranger who appeared to be sad or uncertain. Recall how it affected you. Maybe it made you smile, feel happier, or even inspired you to do something similar at the next opportunity. This is just one of the benefits to our community of practicing RAK.

Other benefits include relieving stress, cultivating an atmosphere of compassion, and changing the way that you think about your daily interactions with others. The Center for Investigating Healthy Minds at the Waisman Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison reported that when we train ourselves to be more compassionate, our brain registers changes on an MRI machine that indicate a greater tendency to respond to others with caring and concern.

So, what now? If you are convinced that you would like to participate in helping our community become even more of a kind and compassionate place, what can you do?

While there are many ways to practice RAK, I found some ideas to get you started. Perhaps one of these will strike up your interest or will be a cue to an idea of your own:

1. Share a music playlist with a friend.
2. Offer a few hours of free babysitting to someone who needs the break.
3. Pay for the coffee of the person in line behind you.
4. Send a note of appreciation to someone.
5. Hold the door for someone.
6. Pat someone on the back for a job well done.
7. Take time to speak to someone new.

In whatever way you choose, being kind, going out of your way for someone, or just sharing a smile or a kind word can make someone’s day, improve how you feel, and help to create a positive, compassionate environment for the entire community.