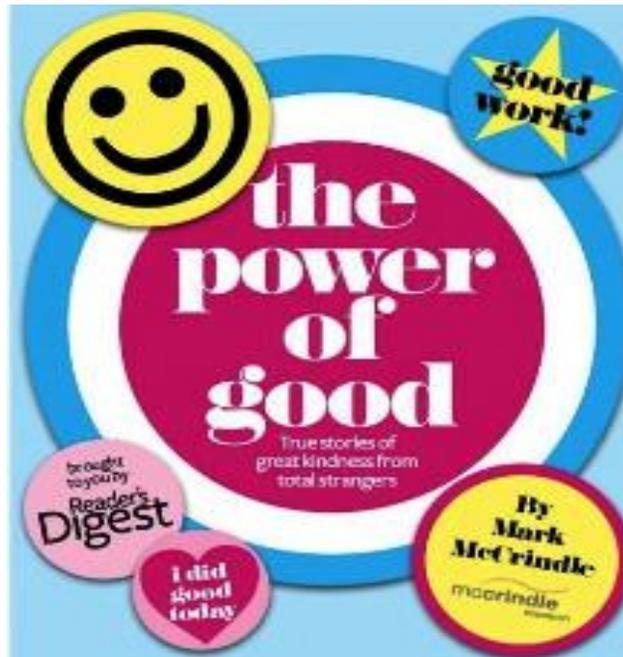


Chapter Excerpts from
The Power Of Good Book



By

McKindle Research

Ebook created by

Janice Davies ASM

Attitude Specialist.

www.attitudespecialist.co.nz

INTRODUCTION

The chapters of this book are from the book and ebook called **The Power Of Good** by McKrinkle Research in Australia. They have allowed us to share these stories with you as a gift of kindness, which extends the 'feel good' concept of this book.

JANICE DAVIES – THE LADY WITH NICE IN HER NAME ATTITUDE SPECIALIST



Janice Davies – The Attitude Specialist, Professional Speaker, Trainer, Author and Coach, was invited to share her story *The Angel Wears a White Cardigan*. Her story appears on page 30.

Janice works with motivating an inspiring people's thinking and attitude to spring load to success. She's an expert she says, because she had to do it for herself.

Her greatest journey, after many stumbles along the way was discovering her real self then re-aligning her dreams, and years of working towards creating them.

She calls herself the Attitude Specialist and educates people about empowerment. She presents at conferences and in-house training with her keynote presentations and workshops where she works with corporate business and small business groups and individuals steering them towards success.

Janice is the founder of Self Day - the International Self Esteem day which is an annual awareness day each June. She is a participant in the Your Guide to True Happiness DVD with 8 other experts and shares her ideas about self esteem.

Janice's speciality topics include: Dealing with Difficult People, Your Life's Attitude, Believing in Yourself, XFactor Confidence. You can follow her on

- Blog - <http://www.attitudespecialist.blogspot.com/>
- Twitter - <http://twitter.com/AttitudeTrainer> -
- Or visit her websites for the free articles, ebooks, courses and webinars at:
- www.attitudespecialist.co.nz
- www.internationalselfesteem.com
- www.attitudetrainingforyou.com
- www.xfactorconfidence.com.
- If you have any questions please email Janice at Janice@attitudespecialist.co.nz.

2. Acts of Kindness in Hardship and Misfortune

Louise Hall, Reporter, the Sydney Morning Herald

Food for Thought

Every Saturday the oncology ward at Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick is turned into a giant BBQ for sick kids and their families. It's a tradition that's been going on for 30 years, thanks to nursing assistant Patsy Jones.

Each weekend she buys a heap of sausages, chipolatas, chickens, salads and bread and cooks up a feast on her trusty BBQ named "Elvis".

Patsy, 58, began providing lunch when she noticed most of the cancer patients didn't eat the hospital food, and their parents often went without proper meals for days at a time. Three decades later, the "pocket dynamo" has become a hospital institution.

"Many of the Hospital's former patients who come back to

visit don't remember much except Patsy's BBQ," says Nurse Unit Manager, John Watt.

"Patsy is such a great cook, she could have easily set up her own catering business but chose to work as a nurse assistant in the Sydney Children's Hospital oncology ward. She is truly an extraordinary person who gives so much of herself to so many people. She not only cooks the BBQ on the weekend but on special occasions, such as birthdays, she will bake a cake for a parent, carer or staff member," he says.

"Thank you from all the patients, families and staff for the fantastic job that she does."

The parents and siblings of sick children also appreciate the chance to have a chat with other families in the same situation.

"Her BBQs are almost like a social outing for patients, families and carers who are on the ward and you sometimes forget you are in hospital," said Maria Celi, whose son Santo, eight, is an oncology patient.

"We are from outside of Sydney, and when we arrived at the hospital we felt so welcomed by Patsy. She never fails to introduce herself to newcomers to the ward and will make sure you know where everything is within the hospital and around Randwick."

"Both Santo and I always look so forward to Patsy's Saturday BBQs, it's become the highlight of our week."

Patsy is given a budget of \$100 a week from a special fund set up by the family of a former patient. While she gives herself

school holidays off to see her son Marcus and grandsons Seth and Lachlan, she says she's not ready to down tongs just yet. "I'll keep doing it till I retire, but they told me I'm not allowed to retire," she laughed.

In September of 2010, Patsy benefited from the Channel 9 TV show Random Acts of Kindness when her BBQ area was renovated while she was whisked away on a family holiday paid for by the show.

Louise Hall has been working for Fairfax since 2005 when she completed her traineeship and had the education round before moving to health at the Sun-Herald. She is now the State Political Reporter for the Sydney Morning Herald.

Anton Enus, News Presenter, SBS World News

Comradeship at the Comrades Marathon



The buzz at the starting line of the world's greatest ultra-marathon is unmistakable. It's the heady tingle of excitement laced with a dash of trepidation. The Comrades Marathon, founded in 1921 to honour those who fell in the trenches of the Great War, is a South African institution. It's like no other race in the world: an unforgiving

character test over 90 long kilometres. Torturous climbing alternates with muscle-wrenching downhill. If, at the end of a taxing day, you make it to the finish line in time (not one second over eleven hours!), you're rewarded with a medal. It's a modest acknowledgment but I can tell you from personal experience that the ten I've earned mean more to me than almost any other material possession.

Here's the funny thing. It almost didn't happen for me. When I got to my first Comrades in 1987, I was young and stupid enough to think I could conquer it. In my early twenties something told me that I had to do no more than front up and the glory would be

mine. Not the glory of actually winning the race, you understand, but the satisfaction of being an official finisher. All I had to do, I thought, was take my 42.2 km marathon qualifying time (three hours 23 minutes), double it and add an extra half-hour as a cushion. So in my mind I was a shoo-in for a sub-7 hours 30 minutes, which would have earned me a silver medal.

Only, at around the 70-kilometre mark my body somehow rebelled against me. I was in pain from cramping muscles and sore knees. I was mentally flailing about, barely keeping focus on the job at hand. I had an overwhelming feeling of wanting to stop and lie down. There and then I had no idea how I was going to get to the next kilometre marker, let alone the finish line!

But an odd thing happened. An apparition settled in next to me as I shuffled along. It was a real, flesh-and-blood person, of course, but in my fragile state anything seemed possible. I have no idea who this runner was, but my recollection is that she was middle-aged, short and a little dumpy. In other words, not what you'd think of as a typical athlete. But she was coping a heck of a lot better than I was with the heat, the distance and the hills (the worst one, Polly Shorts, was still to come!). And yet she found the time to run at my side, gently urging me on, helping me take the focus away from my pain.

In a few minutes she was gone, but her pep talk got me going again. I struggled through the last twenty kilometres and finished, spent but happy, in ten hours and 47 minutes. To me, my

guardian angel remains nameless and unthanked, but there's no question, her intervention got me to the finish line. And finding a way through that day proved to be a seminal experience because it taught me that nothing else in my life or career was ever again going to be put into the "too hard" basket.

South-African born news presenter Anton Enus has been a newscaster and journalist for twenty years. Anton is also long-distance runner, having completed more than 40 standard or ultra-marathons.

David Richardson, Reporter, Today Tonight

The “Mummy’s Boys”

They come from all walks of life. A carpenter, a plumber, a couple of sparkies, an industrial insulation installer, two or three retired football professionals, a television journalist, even some high-flying bank executives ... completely different personalities joined by one common bond: Australian mateship! This band of 40-something dads couldn't be pried apart with dynamite. They call themselves the “Mummy’s Boys” and they've been the best of friends for a decade, some even longer. Once a month they gather in an informal fathers' group to play soccer together, regale each other with tales of how their lives are going, seek advice from each other, and generally have a good time. It's a release where men can let down their guards in the fellowship of friends.

The soccer is at times (very rare times) pretty to watch. It has certainly improved since the first game. Invariably there's an injury or three, but after all these years no broken bones, thank God. But within the group is a collective heart that is purely Australian. Each person would do their utmost to help their mate, regardless of the situation. But they also help others. It's just in their nature.

A friend from work was organising a cancer fundraising evening and hoped to sell a massive number of tickets. Every dollar raised would purchase a balloon, the object being to fill a car with balloons, with the money going to research to help beat this shocking disease. She asked me if I knew anyone who might help out. Of course, the “Mummy’s Boys”. One email and the call to arms was answered. Not by one or two, but by almost all of them. Additional tables were put in to cater for the numbers. They parted with their hard-earned money for a cause they knew nothing about, collected a few prizes at the door, and bid some money on some auction items.

The end result was a massive kickstart for the cancer group. But more importantly, it proved that altruism and good spirit are alive and well in the suburbs. They didn’t even know the person in whose honour the charity night was organised! It didn’t matter. It was the right thing to do.

These men, brothers now, have been a rock of support for me and others. They don’t ask for anything except a thanks, a pat on the back every now and again, and a cold beer as a reward. They pitch in to help others without a thought for themselves. Laying a slab at a mate’s house takes just a couple of hours with the band of “Mummy’s Boys” helping out.

And if someone is down, even battling a bout of depression, going through hard times, balancing precariously on the precipice we all walk, there is a safety net below manned and held tight by

this group of rare individuals to catch you if you fall, or hold you dear to stop you tumbling over.

I am proud and honoured to call them all “mate”. They know who they are and how important they all are.

Oh and by the way, their wives, the so-called “Mummies”, aren’t bad either!

David Richardson is a senior investigative reporter at Today Tonight. He worked in radio before he came to television where he has worked for both Channel 7 and 10. David has been the recipient of two prestigious awards for his work in journalism: The Pater Award for Professional Excellence in Radio Arts and Sciences and the Thorn Award for Best Current Affairs Report.

Simon Reeve, Presenter, Sunrise

A Cardiologist with a Heart

In August 2001 our second child, Sam, came into the world in Perth. After leaving my partner Linda and our little boy at the hospital that evening, I went home to celebrate. As I walked in the door the phone rang; a devastated Linda told me to come back to the hospital as there was a problem with Sam.

Within the hour a team of paramedics had Sam in an ambulance heading for Princess Margaret Children's Hospital, with the two of us, scared and bewildered, following behind.

Many hours and several tests later, Sam was diagnosed with a complex heart defect. The person who delivered the news was cardiologist Dr Luigi D'Orsogna. In the days and weeks ahead, Luigi became a rock for Linda and me. He was always available to chat, always calm and positive. Sam needed major surgery which would be performed by Dr David Andrews, who was then the only kids' heart surgeon in WA.

We went along and listened to David talk to a bunch of heart kids' parents before Sam's procedure. He was in tears describing how much his job meant to him. Every procedure, every little life

mattered to him as if it was his own child.

We ended up in tears listening to him, but we were very sure that this was the guy we wanted to operate on our own child.

Sam had his operation at three months. There were complications in the surgery and the little fellow was in theatre for about fourteen hours. He eventually pulled through and gradually improved in the days after.

Luigi and David became great friends through our shared experience. They deal with dozens of heart kids' parents every year, but made us feel very special.

You can never describe what it's like to put your own flesh and blood into the trust and care of others for life-saving surgery. They showed extraordinary compassion far beyond their roles as highly skilled professionals.

Linda and I are forever in debt to the two of them. Wonderful doctors and even better human beings!

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Simon Reeve is the Weekend Sunrise sports presenter. He also hosts police show The Force and kids show It's Academic. Simon started working for Channel 7 in 1979. His long career with the network has also seen him work for Seven News and Beyond 2000.

Susanne Gervay, Author, Dover Heights NSW

With Pain Comes the Joy of Kindness



Swollen eyelids shut tight. Head shaven bare. The woman strokes the baby's face ... A plastic tube feeds into the baby's nose and a drip is taped onto her arm. A catheter empties urine into a bag. Her arms are in splints. Her small body is wrapped in gauze. Her hands are in mittens also tied to splints. She tries to open her eyes, searching through the swelling.

The nurse comes to check tubes and vital signs.

The woman brushes back her dark wispy hair and looks up at the nurse. "What is wrong with that baby? Where is her hair? ... Her face? ... Her body?"

"Remember the doctor spoke to you about it?" The nurse's voice gently persists ... "Remember? Remember?"

"No. Spoke to me? No."

"About her body, her face." Pulling a chair close, the

nurse sits next to her. “The baby will ... she will ... look a little different.”

The woman stares confused at the nurse in her white uniform. “Where is Katherine? Where is my baby? My little girl?”

The nurse answers softly. “This is Katherine. You can see her.”

“But I can’t. I can’t ... see her. I can’t see her.”

This is an extract from my novel *Butterflies* where I relate the real incident of the kindness of the nurse who sat beside a mother whose little girl had been severely burnt.

The writing of *Butterflies* humbled me. My research at the Burn Unit in the Children’s Hospital Westmead and the interviews with children who were burnt – siblings, parents, doctors, nurses, health teams, volunteers, the Fire Brigade and others – gave me insight into their world. The trauma, treatment, surgeries, and emotional and physical challenges of burns are extreme. However, I saw moving acts of kindness where a nurse would hold a child, a volunteer sit beside a parent, a doctor play with the families at the Burn Camp, therapists care for children emotionally and physically.

Dr Hugh Martin, Head of the Burn Unit at the Children’s Hospital Westmead, wrote: “Those of us who are involved in the world of burns know how survivors need help from time to time,

but slowly develop a depth of character and an inner strength which is rarely seen in others. Like tempering steel, the process of passing through the fire helps make a person of exceptional quality.”

I saw how the kindness of strangers travels with these young burn survivors and their families to create a better society. Through them, I was able to put my arms around a child badly scarred and not see the scars.

Susanne Gervay is an award-winning youth author. Her young adult novel *The Cave* received The Society of Women Writers Biennial Young Adult Book Award and *Butterflies* was nominated as Outstanding Youth Literature on Disability. Susanne is also the Director of the Kids and Young Adult Writers Festival and Chair of the Sydney Writers and Illustrators Network.

www.sgervay.com

Rick Ardon, News Presenter, Channel 7 Perth

A Life-saving Act of Kindness

In the '60s, medical research wasn't as advanced as it is today. I was five, and contracted a form of encephalitis that was deadly to most victims. I was wheeled into the operating theatre at Princess Margaret Children's Hospital with a surgeon ready to operate on a twisted bowel, a mistaken diagnosis. Luckily, I was wheeled out again when they decided I was too weak to operate on.

My mother sat with me and still tearfully recalls me telling her, "I don't want to die" even though I was unaware of what was happening.

Two acts of kindness followed. The head of my primary school, Sister Ann, arrived and told me the whole school was praying for me. In her larger-than-life nun's habit, she looked as though she had been talking directly to God.

Then a brilliant young surgeon who had returned from studying in England saved my life. He recognised the symptoms no one else could see, and administered lifesaving medicine. I had to learn to walk again because of the encephalitis, but recovered fully soon afterwards.

This book inspired me to do a Google search on my saviour who, it turns out, is still saving lives four decades later. His name is Dr Peter Silberstein.

This book also inspired me to ring him and thank him for what he did.

I thank God for the medical researchers and practitioners out there who are so valuable to our community. I have had 44 extra years of a wonderful life thanks to Peter.

In 2005, Rick Ardon and his co-anchor Susannah Carr celebrated their 20th consecutive year reading the news together on Seven News, Perth.

Rick's long television career has earned him ten Logie Awards as Western Australia's Most Popular TV Personality.

Elizabeth Brew, Secretary of Adoption Support
Network Origins Inc NSW

Where There is Life There is Hope

It was the day of our four-year-old's operation to remove a cancerous tumour. Our son had been in theatre for a couple of hours already when the surgeon entered the waiting room to convey the news of medical challenges related to the particular spread of his tumour. This was a huge confrontation. I tried desperately to hold back the emotion as I imagined I would recall this day in hindsight as the unhappiest of my life. It was a living nightmare.

In a flight response, I hurried from the crowded waiting room, looking for some place to escape the panic. Entering a medical information centre for parents of sick children at the Westmead Children's Hospital, I hid in a corner pretending to read a book. A woman approached me to offer assistance. Noticing my distress, she asked, "Are you OK?"

Breaking down, I revealed my innermost fears to a complete stranger. She embraced me and gently said, "Your son is in the best place. Don't be afraid, you'll not be alone in this. There are many caring people here who will help you get through this."

The kindness and words of hope of this stranger gave me the courage to return to the waiting room, composed, to sit it out with my husband, to be brave for our little son.

At the conclusion of the operation, the surgeon conveyed to us that the complications had been narrowly avoided, much to our relief.

Many times during our long stay at the hospital, I recalled those words of hope granted by a stranger as new challenges emerged almost on a daily basis. Our son had a long battle to recover his health but it was, as the stranger had said it would be, not one fought alone by us. With a gentle touch of human kindness, a stranger had given me courage and the age-old wisdom that where there is life there is hope.

www.originsnsw.com/

Sue Curby, Unsworn Member of Federal Police, Woronora Heights NSW

Kindness in the Face of Death

My brother was dying in Bega hospital. Both my older sister and I were sitting with him to ease his passing with love. He was not lucid but we were sure he was aware we were there. He had become increasingly disturbed as he got closer to his time of death and, although we could ease his suffering a little bit, we could not stop his hallucinations.

One of the nurses who cared for Mike was on duty during one of his more unsettled times. To this day I cannot remember her name, but she came from Tilba Tilba and had a beautiful nature. She held his hand and sang in a beautiful voice; the song was a death song of welcome and release from suffering. Our brother became very still as a sense of peace came over him and he stopped fighting the demons within. The most astounding thing of all was that while this nurse sang, not in a quiet voice but with full-bodied sound, the rest of the hospital stopped still. Not a soul moved, spoke or made a noise, and both my sister and I wept. This lady eased our brother's passing and two days later he died peacefully. She had helped him and us to be at peace. I believe she was an angel spreading her wings of love.

Penny Burke, Director of Essence Communications

I am Not a Runner; I Just Occasionally Jog



I am one of those people with a short attention span who suffers the appalling condition of “oncer”.

I have been bungee jumping. Once.

I have written one book.

I completed an entire weekend’s training in parachuting so I could jump out of a plane at 10,000 feet. Just once.

And one day, browsing in a bookshop, I came across a book

titled Run your first marathon with 70 days training. Now, I am not a runner. I have always been an active person but I am far from svelte, and certainly do not enjoy the body shape of serious joggers. But I am extremely determined!

I planned an extensive training regime exactly 77 days from the 1990 Melbourne Marathon and dedicated many weekends and early mornings running long distances in rain, hail and not much shine. Fear is a great motivator. I worried deep in my heart

that if I didn't get up and jog I would never get through it; that all these hours of training would be for nothing.

Soon race day was upon me.

It's a marvellous thing, this running fraternity. The atmosphere of the race is electric – everyone is cheering for you, offering you Vaseline as you run past for chafing, and jelly beans for quick energy hits. My wonderful partner (now hubby) rode his bike between his brother and me in support of us both – it was an unbelievably exciting experience.

But marathons are hard.

At 38 kilometres – only four kilometres from the end – I hit the wall. I felt physically sick and totally spent. My feet were numb, I felt faint and clammy, and I had lost track of my support team. I could see I only had four kilometres to go – and you would think after running all this way, another four kilometres would be nothing!

But running is as much a mental challenge as it is physical. I was thoroughly exhausted – and for the first time, doubt crept in.

I wasn't going to make it.

And that's when my stranger appeared next to me and announced: "OK, I've been running behind you for about ten kilometres, and you're flagging. Now I'm telling you we're going over that line together. Come on, let's do it."

I had no energy left to be kind in return. This stranger had

touched a nerve in me that spoke to my fear of failure. I replied, exhausted, “I can’t! I’ll never make it! I’m not a runner!”

“It’s your first marathon, isn’t it?”

I was too tired even to speak so my head lolled around in a vague gesture of agreement.

“Well, this is my tenth, and I’m not finishing it without you.”

If I’d had any moisture left in my body I would have cried. But I had none.

My stranger kept asking me questions – where I worked, what I did for a living, if my family would be at the finishing line waiting. It was intensely annoying as it felt I didn’t have any oxygen left to form sentences in response – but he was engaging me in conversation to keep my mind off the pain as we ran those interminable four kilometres.

When that finishing line came into view it was the most glorious sight I had ever seen. And as we ran under the clock this wonderful kind stranger held my arm up in a final gesture of victory.

I fell into my family’s excited grasp, too exhausted to speak but intensely proud. My stranger presumably went off to his, celebrating his tenth marathon.

I am not a runner. But I did once run a marathon – and I could not have made it without the help of a magnificent stranger to whom I am forever grateful.

Penny Burke is the director of consultancy company, Essence Communications. She is also a professional speaker whose topics include marketing and advertising. Penny was the recipient of TEC's Best New Speaker Award in 2008. She is the author of *Forced Focus*.

www.essencecomms.com.au

Terry Hawkins, People in Progress and Terry Hawkins Enterprises

The Story Behind the Face: When Hearts Collide

Many years ago while I was presenting a three-day sales training program in Melbourne, we were discussing the importance of connecting with people on an emotional level when in a sales situation. The main point that we made was how often sales people just saw the customer as a transaction. One of the things I was stressing was the importance of letting people know that we care about them as a person first and that the sale must always come second to this.

I asked the group for stories of where they had connected with someone in a sales situation and if it had manifested into a meaningful experience. One young woman in the group volunteered a beautiful story of a connection she had made with a female customer a few months prior. Her story moved us all to stillness.

Working in a clothing store, the female employee encountered a customer as she was looking for clothing for her son. After about 45 minutes of serving her and enjoying a friendly connection,

the customer decided on quite a few shirts, jeans, jumpers and socks. As she was finalising the payment details, the young female employee explained to our group that she had a sense that something was not quite right with the customer. She explained, "I felt nervous about whether to say anything or not but I just had this incredible feeling that I had to." She said that she looked at the woman with genuine concern and asked caringly, "Are you OK?" The woman's eyes filled with tears instantly as she looked down. The young girl then came out from behind the counter and asked her, "Would you like to have a coffee with me?" The woman nodded and said that she would dearly love that. These two virtual strangers then headed out to spend a few moments together.

The customer proceeded to explain that the clothes were actually for her son who she had only recently discovered was a drug addict, living on the streets. She explained how she had only just found him after many years of not knowing where he was and was feeling completely devastated and helpless. The young girl went on to explain that her brother had also been a drug addict for a long period of time and had only just come clean. She went on to share her own family's story of struggle, sadness and finally great joy as they helped him find his life again. Through her sharing of her truth she was able to understand completely the traumatic experience this customer was immersed in.

This random pair of people who had no idea about each other's lives was now connected on a much more meaningful

level, all because the young girl had a “feeling”. This wonderfully wise young woman connected with her customer on a much more important level than just selling products. She connected with her heart-to-heart. She had formed a trusting relationship, albeit for only 40-odd minutes, but it was long enough for this woman to reach out for help.

To me, this is the most powerful and beautiful aspect of demonstrating kindness: that quite often it is not premeditated. It’s just a moment in time, where if we are centred in helping others, we will see the opportunity to be and act in a kind way to another human being appear right before us.

This beautiful story of kindness demonstrated to me that this young girl, no more than twenty years old, was sensitive enough to be able to connect with someone else who had a heart that was breaking. Her act of kindness in wanting to share some time with this woman and to just sit and be with her, I believe influenced this woman in a really powerful way.

Her story held us all in silence and her actions inspired every one of us to be a better, kinder human being.

I hope that this story will also inspire you to just “pay attention”. We all have to pay a price in life and the price we have to pay is to “pay attention”! If we focus on noticing and caring about others we will find numerous opportunities where people may need our thoughtfulness and our awareness. There are so many people on this planet who need others to do acts of

kindness for them. These can be anything, from a smile across the street to holding a door open to paying for someone's groceries.

It doesn't have to be a lot but if we all just go looking for that moment where we could touch the heart of another, in a small but meaningful way, we'll find it. Sometimes all people need is to know that there is someone who does notice them; that there is someone who allows them to feel significant. If we all did that then I believe this world would heal a lot faster and we would evolve a lot more quickly.

Terry Hawkins is a motivational speaker. Her company People in Progress Pty Ltd is a provider of business training programs and resources that build a company's profile, culture and profits.

www.peopleinprogress.com.au

Janice Davies, Motivational Speaker and Author,
Auckland New Zealand

The Angel Wore a White Cardigan



Becoming a mother for the first time, I was a novice! I had spent years travelling the world and any conversation about parenthood I shied away from. Therefore suddenly being at home with a newborn baby, who I fell in love with, also led me down a path of loneliness and unhappiness.

When my daughter Claire was ten months old I found this fantastic organisation in New Zealand called Playcentre. The philosophy behind it was to teach children through play, followed by teaching parents about helping their children to learn.

On my first visit I felt at home. Suddenly I had ladies I could talk to about being a mum and what I should, could or should not do for my daughter. I was offered a coffee and my daughter quickly settled in to the new toys and other children to play with.

After a few weeks of attending I was approached by a lady

who was at that time a stranger to me. She was wore a white cardigan and today, twenty years later, I joke about her being an angel in disguise.

Diane was a mother with three children and had formed a wonderful group of friends at the play centre. She was always busy, chatty, laughing and helping others. She suggested I would benefit from joining the play centre parent training program. At that stage I was bumbling my way through parenting my young daughter. She explained how it would teach me to decide what was appropriate behaviour for my daughter and how I could rephrase my conversations with her. She also explained how I could learn about her stages of development and could subsequently always interact with her at the appropriate level. She described how I would find new friends to replace my ex-work friends who I did not see anymore, and the huge benefits I could achieve from this training.

I did not agree immediately to start the training; Diane was patient and persistent in telling me how I would benefit from this program. Eventually I said yes, and I must admit this was the beginning of a new outlook on life for me. It was not just about parenting, but about myself, my capabilities, my self-esteem, my communication and my life. Today, I view this as a major critical turning point in my life.

After I completed my Playcentre training program, I continued on with the Leadership training. Eventually I became a

leader in these programs and today I continue some of this same information in my workshops and as a motivational speaker, business trainer, author and success coach.

Diane's kindness and generosity changed my life and I know as she walks through life, she has laughter, support and words of comfort and praise for others. She is truly an angel wearing a white cardigan who is now a lifelong friend and a leader to others in the childcare world.

Janice Davies is also the founder of International Self Esteem Day. She lives and works in New Zealand.

www.attitudespecialist.co.nz

www.internationalselfesteem.com

The Reverend Graham Long, Pastor and CEO of the Wayside Chapel, Kings Cross

A Kiss from Heaven

There are no rules for grieving. When our son died in 2009, I knew that life had changed forever but I could not articulate anything about the change. I was not the only one stuck for words. I found myself swimming in a sea of human kindness but no one really knew what to say. Perhaps there is nothing that ought to be said. At the time the phrase, “if there is anything I can do ...”



was offered to me, over and over and yet no one could do the one thing that I wanted.

Some generous and beautiful people offered various options for a holiday. However, I needed the routine of work and wanted to be not too far away from my three little granddaughters whose loss was not just beyond words but also beyond imagination.

Perhaps it was not the ideal reaction, but I found at the time (and to this day) that I have an overwhelming sense that life only lasts for a few minutes. I figure that I have only 60 seconds or so

left and I'm determined not to waste my last precious few seconds in a tailspin. I want to live as if I was making my son proud of my efforts. I always strove to make him proud of me.

After some months, people had ceased to say awkward things and had generally settled back into the routine of life. I was partly grateful for the lack of difficult moments where warmth and care were communicated not through language but in spite of it, and yet I was astonished to find the world moving along without my boy in it.



Gazza, the homeless man (left) and Graham

At The Wayside Chapel one day, as I was heading out to a meeting, a homeless man walked into my path in a way that for a moment was pretty confusing. I thought he wanted to talk with me but it became fairly obvious that no conversation was on offer. I knew the man well enough by sight but we'd not talked at depth.

He stepped right into my face and threw his arms around me. He kissed me on the side of my face and whispered, “This is from your son,” and then walked away.

Reverend Graham Long has been the pastor and CEO of the Wayside Chapel since 2004. His time working in community service has seen him fill various roles including social worker, prison chaplain, child protection advocate and welfare agency founder.

www.thewaysidechapel.com/

Peter H. Devin, Author, California USA

A Bucket List Dream Come True

When my wife, Andrea, and I saw the movie *The Bucket List*, I thought I should create a list of my own, but I figured it would be way in the future. On 9 September 2009, that all changed.

After a year of testing because of speech difficulties, I was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis – better known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. ALS is a disorder of the motor neurons of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord that control the action of voluntary muscles. For unknown reasons, the motor neurons die and the muscles they control no longer function. ALS gradually causes paralysis. There is currently no cure for it, and most patients live three to five years following diagnosis.

It took us a few days to even gather the strength to tell our son, his wife and our daughter. We all sat together in our backyard, and I announced, “Dad has ALS.” The tears were immediate and long; shock and disbelief followed. We all hugged and held each other, saying we would fight this together.

My speech is difficult to understand because I’ve lost those neurons that control the larynx and voice. So although I still have

good mobility and strength to play golf and get around, I have all but lost the ability to speak. I now communicate by typing into either an app on my iPhone or a special communications device that speaks for me.

At this stage of my life, Andrea and I have prayerfully determined to live, focusing on our faith in God and spending quality time with family and friends. And going to the Masters.

When we began to talk about my disease, there was an immediate outpouring of love and support from all over the country, from my college fraternity, my colleagues at work and a community of friends and family. We have felt totally blessed and honoured to have so many friends who truly care.

Once I was playing golf with some college friends and they asked me about my bucket list. I said if I had one, going to Augusta National to watch the Masters would be on it.

So a week prior to last year's Masters, Andrea couldn't keep it a secret any longer. My friends had planned a trip for us to go to Augusta. Naturally, I was over the moon with excitement, and I sent a message of thanks to my buddies. Later I learned that more than twenty guys and their families had pitched in and were involved. Additionally, another long-time friend called and told me that his friend, PGA TOUR pro Robert Allenby, had two badges for us for Wednesday's practice round and the Par 3 Contest.

Then the unthinkable happened. Robert texted Andrea to ask

if I would like to caddy for him. Of course Andrea knew I'd love to.

When we arrived at Augusta National, the head of security helped me get authorisation to take my voice machine onto the grounds. She was gracious and helpful towards my unique situation.

As we made our way to the expanse of the course, I just took it all in – the water, the hills, the azaleas and the endless pine and dogwood trees. That afternoon we met Robert Allenby, who welcomed us and introduced me to his regular caddy, Joe Damiano, who gave me instructions and told me where to meet for the Par 3 Contest.

Meanwhile, Kimberly Gay, TOUR pro Brian Gay's wife, contacted Andrea and asked if we could spend some time with them. We were overwhelmed with joy and gratitude that these PGA TOUR stars and their families would be so kind to complete strangers.

On Wednesday we met Robert and Joe again. From the clubhouse we went to the starting hole at the par-3 course. The crowds were large as Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player had teed off just two groups ahead of us. Many of the players had their kids or grandkids caddy for them. What was really cool was that each of the players took time to sign autographs for hundreds of children throughout the afternoon.

The experience for me was somewhat surreal, to be at the

Masters, to meet the players and the caddies and to be inside the ropes at the Par 3 Contest. Robert was gracious, kind and accommodating to everyone but made sure to always stay in conversation with me, especially when my speech was so hard to understand.

Robert played the first two holes of the Contest beautifully, and we were two-under going to No. 3. By the time we were through, we were at even-par – no thanks to my three-putt on the 9th green. Yes, when Robert teed off on the 9th hole, he told me that I would have to make a long birdie putt to make it good. I responded with, “What? I’m not putting for you.”

“Yes you are.”

After his tee shot, Robert said, “Just tap it because it will go a long way on these greens.” So I tapped it, and it went about 3 feet – which was, unfortunately, about 20 feet short of the hole. I putted again, and the ball went right by the hole, long by 2 feet. I then tapped it in. Even-par 27.

If I did have a bucket list, my experience at the Masters would have been on it. My friends and the people there made our experience very special. To all the people who made my trip possible I’m grateful. Our experience was like no other I had ever enjoyed. Both Andrea and I will cherish our time with the gracious people under the dogwoods and pine trees of Augusta National.

Ken B. Marslew AM, CEO of Enough is Enough
Anti-Violence Movement Inc.

Kindness in Dark Places



My 18-year-old son, Michael, was murdered during an armed holdup. In the early years following Michael's murder, I began running programs in correctional centres across NSW. Remember I was a very angry man; I still am, although I use my anger in a positive way these days. I was working with a group of serious offenders, about a dozen men. My subject was "personal responsibility".

During the presentation, one of the offenders said, as many do, "It wasn't my fault." I challenged him: "Whose fault was it?" As the excuses flowed I got aggro and said, "Don't you understand what responsibility means? You crap on to everyone, including yourself. When are you going to grow a set, and accept the truth about your behaviour?"

At this point the inmate, a big man with a shaved head and

many prison tattoos, jumped to his feet and lunged at me.

To my surprise, two of the other inmates in the group also jumped up and restrained the original inmate, saying, "Can't you see this bloke is trying to help you? Sit down, shut up and listen." He did.

This act surprised me, and was one of many things to happen to me in prison, which made me see inmates in a different light.

Even in the darkest places, there is good in the supposed worst of us and, dare I say, there is some bad in the best of us.

Ken B. Marslew AM is a NSW Senior Australian of the Year 2010 State Finalist. He was foremost in establishing the Charter of Victim Rights in 1996.

Father Chris Riley, CEO of Youth off the Streets

Rod's Story



A couple of months ago, I was responding to some questions from a journalist who wanted to write a story about Youth off the Streets. The first question was: "Can you tell me a success story?" I was answering these questions via email. My response was: "Certainly, I have a very special success story."

I began to write about a young man who I had worked with for the past ten years. Our first encounter with Rod was when my street team found him living on the streets and using heroin. He entered our Drug and Alcohol program and it took him a few tries to get clean, but he did. He then transferred to our residential services in the Southern Highlands and I had the privilege of teaching him English from Year 10 through to HSC. I had taught HSC English for many years, but had never given 10 out of 10 for an essay, until Rod. He had the ability to develop great insight into texts and an ability to communicate those insights through

the written word. When he left our services, he got into university and was in third year. Another incredible achievement.

He was a young man who was larger than life. He loved helping others and volunteering. He would attend every camp for kids with disabilities and was always the carer for the most challenging young person. He showed such great love and concern. He travelled to East Timor with us to the orphanage where he engaged the hundred orphans very powerfully – swimming in the river with kids all over him, playing games for hours in the stifling heat. They loved him. He also travelled to Albania and worked on a garbage tip which was the home of hundreds of people. I remember him playing soccer in the squalid surroundings. When I decided to travel to Aceh after the 2004 tsunami, after returning from the first visit, he saw some of the media and rang me saying, “I’m coming to Aceh with you.”

I replied with, “Not this time, Rod.”

He asked, “Why not?”

I explained that it might be too dangerous. A Catholic priest in a strong Muslim community may cause problems; there were real health concerns as thousands of bodies still lay in the open and the dogs were beginning to eat the bodies; and finally, the guerrilla army was still killing on average four Indonesian soldiers a night.

His response was, “Well, you are a hypocrite.”

To which I replied, “Oh yeah, how am I?”

He then reminded me of something I had used in a HSC class, quoting Dr Martin Luther King Jnr. "If a man doesn't have anything worth dying for, his life isn't worth living."

I asked him, "And you are prepared to die over this?"

"Yes, I am."

I replied, "Let's go. You can be part of the first volunteer group."

Again he performed incredibly. He was in the first team to respond to the Macquarie Fields community after the terrible riots in early 2005.

As I was writing this, another email popped up on the screen and the message was sharp and devastating: Rod had been found dead in the toilet of a hotel that morning.

It took some time for the message to really hit me. I went white and something inside me cried out, "What the hell have I done for the past 35 years?" All that effort and all that time – and I had failed.

Rod had a mother who loved her son; he was her life and I was worried about her and how this would affect her. When I went to meet her, I started a sentence with the word "if" and she immediately stopped me and said, there are no "ifs". She also reassured me that I should not think that I had failed, as he had achieved so much in the last ten years. From her deep grief, she was looking after me and I will never forget her kindness.

After I had performed the funeral, I heard his friends talking about the fact that he had been sexually assaulted as a young boy. It hit me hard, that this was the one bit of information I never had. I then understood how from time to time he would be overwhelmed by an absolute darkness that I believed related to that terrible part of his life.

The various roles of Father Chris Riley AO have included teacher, youth worker, probation officer, residential carer and principal. He has been the recipient of many awards for his work, including the Lions International Humanitarian Award in 2009. Father Chris was the first Australian to receive this prestigious award.

www.youthoffthestreets.com.au/

Simon Rountree, CEO of Camp Quality

There is Much to See if We Can Close our Eyes for a Moment

Life is always full of surprises, some of which come from the most unexpected source. And so this was the case for me when a young girl's act of kindness taught me about the importance of listening.

It was a normal sunny afternoon when I went to pick my son up from school. I was in a hurry trying to juggle work and family commitments and make certain timelines for both.

When I arrived the school bell had gone and the playground very quickly became a sea of noise. Children were excitedly running around everywhere and screaming, playing games with each other whilst parents continuously called out their children's names in the hope of catching their attention. A thousand people crisscrossed and zigzagged their way through the playground, each hopeful of making it to their destination without collision.

I found my son and was keen to get moving out of the playground so I could get back to the quietness of my car and resume my work phone calls. We had navigated ourselves about half way across the playground when I felt a hand tap my back.

I turned to see a small girl who I had seen before. She was in my son's year but I had never met her. She was holding a white cane in one hand and something else in the other. She stuck out her hand and said, "You dropped this and I think it's your credit card."

Thinking to myself that the card must have fallen out of my pocket and knowing that the girl was blind, I asked how she knew. She replied, "I heard it when it hit the ground after you took your keys out and I can feel that it's a credit card. I picked it up and followed the sound of your keys."

I was amazed that amongst such noise and commotion she could hear something so soft. I thanked her, then watched as she turned and navigated her way back across the playground to her mother without any fuss or acknowledgment that what she had done was any big deal.

This girl's act of kindness not only stopped me from losing my credit card but gave me something far more important. In that moment I learnt a valuable lesson about the importance of listening and being in the moment. By rushing and always thinking ahead, I was missing out on so much of what was happening now.

Having made a mental note of who her mother was the next time I saw her at school, I went up and thanked her for what her daughter had done and the lesson she had taught me. The mother said to me that her daughter was always teaching her things and one of those was that there was much for us to see if we could only

close our eyes for a moment.

Elissa Scott, Recruitment Agent, Budgewoi NSW

From Disappointment to Delight



My stepdaughter Kim, my son James and I attended a Rod Stewart concert three years ago. After parking the car, we went to the entry gates where our tickets were rejected at the turnstiles. We tried again, and this time the buzzers went off.

The attendant said: "Something's wrong with your tickets, please proceed to the Ticketek office desk." We went over and the worker told us: "These tickets are

useless and not worth the paper they are written on. They have been bought with a stolen credit card and sold to you on eBay. It's a case of fraud and they are worthless. Sorry, but there is nothing we can do. You can contact eBay tomorrow to see if they can sort it out." He informed us that we would have to purchase more tickets if we wanted to see the concert.

Three hundred and eighty dollars down the drain and no Rod Stewart concert! I began to cry. My crying got heavier as we walked back through the crowd to our car.

All of sudden, out of the blue, a man stopped me and asked me why I was crying. I explained to him that our tickets were fake. He said to me, “Don’t cry, I have three tickets you can have – my friends haven’t turned up.” I didn’t believe him at first, but he was telling the truth and walked us in. He wanted no money, but for us all to sit with him and not to miss the concert.

Sarah Garnett, Founder of the Benjamin Andrew Footpath Library (TBAFL)

Superman in Disguise



In 1991 my sons were aged two and four and we were living with our much-loved dog, Tash. One day, being a typical labrador, she escaped through the front gate and promptly disappeared into thin air.

For two weeks my husband and I combed the neighbourhood and surrounding suburbs, put up fliers offering a hefty reward and returned home to two crying children. It was awful. To make

matters worse, Tash had been a gift to my husband and he was harder to console than the children.

In the area lived a local character called Bob. He was an eccentric, unkempt old man who walked the streets delivering junk mail and was widely ignored by our community because he was different.

Two weeks after our dog vanished, Bob came to the door so

excited he could barely speak. Tash had been dognapped and was living in a house 100 metres up the road! He had recognised her when walking past, confronted the woman inside and threatened to dob her in to the police if she didn't call us within two hours.

When the woman called, she said that Tash had wandered into her garden and was obviously hungry (Labradors are always hungry!). She thought the dog looked thin (she was 18 years old!), had taken her to the vet, and would not be returning her until she was reimbursed several hundred dollars.

We gladly paid the ransom and took our very sheepish dog home to two overjoyed children.

Bob's act of heroism had a huge effect, not least on Bob himself. From then on he strutted around the neighbourhood with his chest puffed out, telling everyone how he'd saved our dog.

And we told everyone too. The boys thought he was Superman in disguise and we made a friend for life.

Sarah Garnett and the Footpath Library, an organisation that delivers books to the homeless and disadvantaged, benefited from

Channel 9 TV show Random Acts of Kindness in July 2009.

www.footpathlibrary.org/

Joy Robertson, Homemaker, Narrogin WA

The Kindness of Strangers on Country Roads

Many years ago I was travelling on a lonely country road when my headlights failed.

I had my two children with me. It was dark and they were hungry. I looked under the bonnet and couldn't see what was wrong. I wasn't able to let my husband or anyone else know that I was stuck: back in those days, there were no mobile phones. I did not know what to do.

After I'd been sitting in the car for quite some time, a stranger pulled up and asked me what was wrong. I explained my predicament and he proceeded to look under the bonnet. The relay switch had burnt out and needed to be replaced, but how? I was stuck on the side of the road miles from anywhere and it was after 10 o'clock at night.

My knight in shining armour, complete with a European accent, solved my problem. He hooked the wires direct to the battery and got my lights working.

Advising me that I'd have to disconnect the battery lead to switch the lights off, he watched me get under way before

returning to his vehicle and resuming his trip.

I never saw the man again but have always felt very grateful for his help.

Another time, I was travelling alone, also on a country road at night, when my car broke down. Again, stranded with no mobile phone or two-way radio, I was well and truly in trouble. Many cars went past in a shower of stones and dust. My kids were expecting me but I had no way of letting them know what had happened.

A truckie pulled up. Parking his big rig in front of my little car, he was a most welcome sight, I can assure you. He located the electrical problem and found a way to solve it: "For now, at least it will get you home." Then with a cheery wave he was on his way.

I was very late getting home to my kids but at least I got there safely. These kind folk who'll pull up a big rig to help a stranger are my heroes. Knights don't ride big white horses these days; they drive big semis and carry a multitude of useful gadgets. I salute them all.

Leanne Duerkop, Homemaker, Melbourne Vic.

A Brave Kindness

It was Christmas time and the centre was full of shoppers. My sister was shopping with her two children. She sat down to have some lunch with her kids, but soon they were playing up so she went off with them to do the rest of her Christmas shopping. Filling her trolley with all the presents she needed and with two screaming kids, she headed for the register. She unloaded her shopping and went to grab her hand bag to pay for it, but couldn't find it. Realising she had left her handbag where they had eaten, she rushed back to get it but it was gone.

The poor thing was an absolute mess. All her money was gone along with all her important cards. My sister then went to centre management and as she walked in to ask if a handbag had been handed in, an old lady was there handing it over. My sister burst into tears. She couldn't stop thanking the old lady and wanted to give her a reward. All the old lady said was, "You keep your money, dear. I've done my good deed for the day and that's made me happy." My sister couldn't believe her luck.

The lady behind the desk told her that the old lady had seen

my sister leave her bag and then a group of young girls had picked it up. While my sister was busy chasing her kids, the old lady was chasing the group of girls for my sister's bag.

She had walked up to the group and told them to hand it over to her. They tried to play dumb but the old lady wasn't moving without the hand bag.

If only there were more people like that lady. She was not only honest and caring, she was very brave to approach a group and demand the bag back. My sister did not know the lady's name but she made her and her kids' Christmas a very happy one.

Lindy Jones, Professional Speaker, Blacktown NSW

The Bumpy Road of Kindness



The bumps in my life were getting bigger and bouncier – literally and metaphorically. I was 22, seven months pregnant and mum to a one-year-old child. I was married but facing the reality that after seven years together, my husband had no intention of sticking around. He was leaving me and he was leaving our children.

Around the same time I was diagnosed with gestational diabetes. I was devastated as I was forced to begin giving myself injections to control my blood sugar levels. However, the determination to keep getting up each morning was encouraged by the thought that eventually I would hold my two babies. In fact, many days it seemed that they were my only reason for going on.

But something happened. As people heard my story – friends, family, strangers – I was shown kindness in the most amazing way. I began to receive letters and cards in the mail from people I had

never met, gift baskets from strangers and money from people I still to this day have no way of identifying.

I had people cooking for me – a meal each night for almost two weeks. I had boxes of nappies arrive at my door step and a hamper from a church group who I had nothing to do with but just wanted to show that they cared.

A friend of a friend came around to my house and mowed my lawn for me, often on incredibly hot, humid days. I had someone clean my house for me – I was embarrassed to admit that it needed it, but being so far pregnant, the ability to move as easily as normal was limited, to say the least. Others comforted me with the assurance of their prayers.

With no transport for me to get around, somehow a car turned up that allowed me to still attend regular hospital appointments and bring my new baby home from hospital.

People cared. They really, really cared. I have no idea what I did to deserve such an overwhelming response of kindness, but I am incredibly thankful and still, eight years later, in awe. Even as I type this now, my emotions hit a peak that see me confused as to whether I should laugh or cry. I was moved to my very core.

The kindness I was shown both from people I knew and people I didn't was enough to show me that this world is not cold. There are people who care and there are people who think outside themselves and not just about what will be the best thing for them.

However, the greatest gift of all that they gave me was the gift of passing on what is good and kind. Just as they opened my heart in the most incredible way to see a world of people who think about and act in the best interests of others, I too have found a passion in seeing others smile by giving back whatever I can to those who need it most. In fact, my deepest prayer is that in whatever situation I face, through trials and triumphs, I will give because I have witnessed first-hand the power of kindness.

Stephen Murby FRSA, CEO of Cystic Fibrosis Victoria

Of Gift and Grace

It was June 2005, my partner Nigel and I were on a houseboat holiday on the Murray River, travelling from Moama to Torrumbarry Weir. Just the two of us, at a quiet time of the year and a mobile phone that was nearly always “out of range”. I forget how long we had been travelling but clearly remember it had been three days since we had seen another person on or near the river.

It was the first time we had been away for any length of time, just the two of us. (Indeed, a few days later, moored near the weir wall, we expressed our desire to spend the rest of our lives together.) Little did we know that if not for the kindness of strangers, we may never have made it to the weir!

Dinners were a bit of a feature. This evening it was braised oxtail, deliciously slow cooked – yet suddenly there was a large piece of tooth in my mouth leaving a great jagged edge behind! What to do ... no phone... days away from either our destination or point of origin. Not a soul to be seen. Before dinner when I had taken my evening walk I had found a path that led to a track

that led to a reserve that indicated a road to Torrumbarry (five kilometres further on), and from there our map showed Echuca was about twenty kilometres away.

So at daybreak there was nothing for it but to leave Nigel with the houseboat and walk to Torrumbarry from where I hoped to catch a bus and get to Echuca to find a dentist, and get back again before nightfall. There was no way of letting Nigel know what was happening.

It took a while to make it to the road and then I started to walk in earnest. There was absolutely no one – a great silence broken only by bird calls and the cattle I passed. After some time, along came a little car driven by a kindly woman. She stopped and told me that she never picked up hitchhikers. I told her I had never hitchhiked. We made it to the service station at Torrumbarry but there was no bus and no one heading to Echuca that day (the town is pretty small). So it looked like a long walk!

Then the world changed. As the lady who had given me the lift began to leave, her good friends Carol and Lindsay pulled in for petrol en route to Echuca. They were told of my plight and my credentials were confirmed on the basis of a five-minute drive.

Yes I got my lift. I got taken to their dentist. I went shopping with them while I waited for an appointment. Carol and Lindsay then drove me all the way back to the track nearest the houseboat. They had declined my offer of lunch (in fact they skipped it to get me to the appointment on time) and of money for fuel. When we

parted we knew we would never see each other again, and yet how much of our lives and our stories we shared that day.

Stephen Murby is also the Chair of Carrick Higher Education Academic Board, and Treasurer and Acting Chair of Consumer Health Forum.

Tracey Spicer, Former News Presenter for Channel 10 Sydney

Solace in Grief



It was the day Mum finally lost the slender thread of consciousness.

Fifty-two-year-old Marcia Spicer was brave, beautiful and bolshie. But cancer had taken it all away.

She was an empty effigy of the woman who had made our lives so rich with love and laughter.

The doctor gave her seven months. She

took every last day.

Dad, my sister and I sat by her bedside, held her hand, stroked her forehead, painted her toenails and cleaned the mucous from her mouth.

One day, exhausted by grief and futility, I sat on a bench in the lovely gardens of the palliative care ward and quietly wept.

A man sat down next to me. At first I thought, "How dare you intrude on my grief?" But then he started talking. He told

me the story of his wife, who also lay dying on a small and sterile hospital bed. They had been married for more than 50 years. She was still the love of his life. His eyes shone as he spoke of their time together, the children raised, the lessons learned.

“You are an extraordinary man,” I marvelled. “How do you manage to cope?” I asked, desperate for something to fill the aching hole in my heart.

“We have our faith,” he answered simply.

It wasn't said arrogantly. He wasn't trying to convert me. But the look on his face said more than the 774,746 words contained in the Bible. His faith gave him succour. It was his armour.

Then he asked about us. Were we people of faith?

The Spicers are known for many things: the love of a good party; a deep desire to be near the ocean; a healthy dose of scepticism. But we had abandoned our faith.

I realised that this unexpected conversation was a gift. A simple act of kindness. It was as if we were in the trenches and this man – whose name I did not know – was shielding me with his armour.

Mum died the next day. That was eleven years ago.

I still grapple with the concept of faith, the perils of organised religion and the esoteric nature of spirituality. But I will never forget that conversation; nor the wisdom, kindness and courage that were contained within.

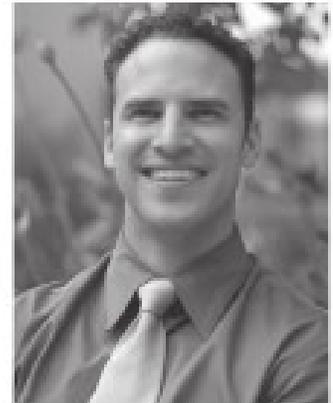
Tracey Spicer has held a long and bright media career. She is currently a fill-in presenter on Sky News Australia. She is also a regular columnist with the Daily Telegraph, the punch.com.au website, and regular contributor to Holidays with Kids, magazine, Travel and Lifestyle, Sunday Telegraph, House & Garden, Go Camping and Weight Watchers magazine. Tracey is an Ambassador for World Vision, WWF, the Queensland University of Technology's Learning Potential Fund and the Penguin Foundation, and Patron of the NSW Cancer Council, the newborn care unit at the Royal Hospital for Women and the National Premmie Foundation.

www.spicercommunications.biz

Blake Beattie, Founder of International Pay it Forward Day, Sydney NSW

Paying it Forward

After starting international Pay it Forward Day back in 2007, I am truly humbled and amazed at the wonderful people in our community who make such a profound difference. There are so many people who open their hearts to others less fortunate and, in doing so, make this world that little bit brighter.



Since Pay it Forward Day began there have been over 250,000 random acts of kindness in 28 countries with sixteen state and city proclamations. Here are some of my favourite examples of people paying random acts of kindness forward:

One lady received a \$10,000 donation for a liver operation she could not afford. To this day she still does not know who performed the good deed.

Another person donated her unused flight credits enabling a family to be reunited at the bedside of a very sick relative.

One boy convinced his mother to top up a parking meter so

that the car owner would avoid a \$79 fine.

School children at Heathcote Primary School put together special care packs for sick children in hospital. They also baked Anzac cookies for the local nursing home and collected non-perishable goods for various charities. The children felt great about making others smile :-)

The great thing about 'paying it forward' is it starts a positive ripple effect of giving in the community and there is no telling how many lives will be positively affected in the process. Of course, we should be paying it forward every day and International Pay it Forward Day is a powerful reminder of the power of giving whereby anyone of any age or background can make a difference.

I am a firm believer in the statement: "From what we get we make a living; from what we give we make a life." We can lift each other up with kindness or get caught up in the busyness of life – it is heartening to see how many people choose the former. The difference we can all make is phenomenal!

Together we can make a difference and change the world – one good deed at a time.

Blake Beattie is also the Vice Chairperson of the Life Changing Experiences Foundation and an acclaimed author and international speaker.

www.payitforwardday.com

Darryl Blake, Best-selling Author, Brisbane NSW

Healing Moments

“Some days are diamond, some days are stone.” Or so the saying goes. We all have memories of outstanding times – days that are imprinted as special for being the very best, or the very worst of our lives. I have been blessed to have many of the former, but I want to share with you how I got through one of the latter.



It started out like any other day until I received the telephone call that my only sibling, my older brother, had died. He was only 27 at the time, two years older than I was. While he had been operated on for cancer only a few months earlier, he had been given the all clear and was expected to recover fully. Instead, an unexpected infection saw him pass away in his sleep at home without warning.

The news came as a shock – I was several hours by car from home when I received the call, and I immediately turned around to head home. But as if the news of my brother’s passing was not

enough, when I got home I found my faithful companion of ten years, my pet dog, lying incapacitated in the back yard. Between calls to my parents and family about my brother, full of grief and bewilderment at the sudden news, I rushed my dog to the local vet. The diagnosis – heart failure. The recommendation – that it would be best to put him out of his pain and put him down immediately. I agreed, and cradled his head gently as his life was extinguished by lethal injection in front of me. What a day! Man's best friend, my beloved dog put down in front of me, while I was twisting in knots on the inside about the unexpected loss of my brother's life.

Next stop after the vet was to drop into work and let them know I would be taking a couple of days off to help with funeral arrangements. I was half way through explaining the reason why I wouldn't be coming to work when it all hit me like a tidal wave – the raw emotion of the loss I had encountered over the previous few hours. I started to choke up, unable to keep talking, and began to walk away from my department manager. At this point, the area manager (whom I had never met before) and who had been listening to the conversation, stepped forward. He didn't let me walk away. He didn't let me suffer alone. Instead he stepped up, warmly taking hold of my shoulder and turning me back toward him. And without any discomfort he immediately gave me a fatherly hug. At the time it was exactly what I needed, and it wasn't until some time after that it occurred to me that he had

shown compassion and courage in that moment. It's easy to feel unsure, uncomfortable and let the moment pass when one could really make a difference to another human being in need. He didn't let the moment pass. He had the courage to act.

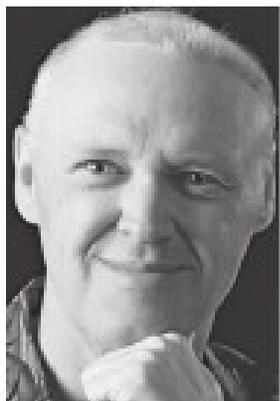
And that's the choice that we can all consider when confronted by hurt and pain. To back away in safety, or to take a risk and make a healing gesture. It could be a kind word, a helpful deed or a simple gesture. But it means stepping out of one's own comfort zone, putting aside one's own fear of intimacy or rejection, and being there totally for someone else, if only for a few precious moments. But those few moments can truly make a difference. They did for me. And that's why I remember the actions of a stranger over fifteen year later.

Darryl Blake is a motivational speaker and the managing partner of Leadership Worldwide. He is the best-selling author of business tome, Skroo the Rules – the Flight Centre Story.

www.darrylblake.com

Anthony Ackroyd, Cast Member of ABC Radio
Comedy Show Thank God It's Friday!

Little Things are Big Things Too



The end of a long day. We have all enjoyed a five-kilometre walk. My wife Anna, son Michael, daughter Brodie and I. A day of gentle sunshine has almost shone its last and we are all happily tired. Time now for a nice cup of tea at home. Anna is at the wheel of our station wagon and reverses out of the car park. She reverses a little too far. We know this is true because the back end of the car drops with a disturbing thump. The sort of thump that lets you know immediately that your cup of tea will have to wait.

My significant other has driven the right rear wheel of the wagon over the edge of a ditch. The ditch is not all that deep, just deep enough to ensure that there is absolutely no hope of driving or pushing the car out of its predicament. OK, apply handbrake and evacuate the vehicle. Now what? We stare at the car and it stares back at us with stubborn solidity. Our roadside assistance provider won't be able to help us with this one. We will need a tow truck.

We are in no danger. None of us are injured or in need of urgent help. But the prospect of what lies ahead is not attractive. Since neither Anna nor I brought our mobile phones on this trip, someone will have to walk more Ks into the nearest town to find a public telephone.

And since neither of us has brought any money, that someone will also need to find another someone in town willing to part with a little change or lend their phone so the call to the tow truck company can be made. Will a tow truck even come if we have no credit card details to proffer? The only sure thing is that this process will take hours, or, measured from the viewpoint of tired children, an eternity. Marital discord is also a distinct possibility.

Then something happens. A 4-wheel drive rolls into the car park. Inside is a man and four children. The man gets out of his car. Is he here to help? No, he doesn't even acknowledge us, just opens the hatch of his car and ... wait ... those are chains in his hands.

"Saw you from the road," he says as he lies down next to our car. In the next five minutes he has the station wagon chained to his tow bar. Then he says, "Okey-dokey", slides into his vehicle and eases down the accelerator. A huge cheer as the right wheel of our wagon climbs over the lip of the ditch. Stress turns to joy. Anna and I add a dozen more "thank yous" to the deluge we've already delivered to our saviour.

"Your Dad's wonderful," I tell the kids in the 4-wheel drive.

One of them shrugs. “He always does stuff like this.” Their dad’s name is Frank and we learn a little about him. He’s an ex-policeman, now he’s a DJ at blue light discos, and he lives not far from us. A handshake and “thanks again”, and he and his tribe are gone.

“I hope that’s your last ditch effort,” I joke to my wife, both of us relieved and grateful to arrive home. The kettle is soon boiling.

As I think about Frank’s actions I realise how quickly he decided to help. There was an embankment between the road and our car that meant our dilemma would have been visible to Frank for only a matter of seconds. He had to register the wheel in the ditch, decide to assist, and then slow down and veer off the road, all in a few heartbeats. But Frank was used to listening to his heart, and because of that he made our hearts so much lighter on the day we met him.

Anthony Ackroyd is an Australian comedian, speaker and writer. He is the creator and Director of The United Nations of Comedy which aims to bring together the best comedy from around the world and build bridges between cultures through shared humour.

www.anthonyackroyd.com

Jean Kittson, Writer, Actor and Comedian,
Mosman NSW

Summer Car Park

My local beach. NSW. 2010. We were surrounded. Four-wheel drives full of overheated squabbling families were desperately circling the car park. We were one of them, crawling behind people in swimsuits licking ice creams, and stopping to ask as innocently as possible, “Are you going?”

To add to the agony and as a random act of greed, our local council had recently introduced parking tickets,

so now you had to have the right change to pay for the privilege of having a place to put your car. We continued to circle, watching beachgoers walk up to parking meters to notch up another three hours! How selfish can you get? I felt like dobbing them in!

I was on the verge of tossing in the towel and screaming at the kids, “This whole planet is full of selfish, selfish people! We are going home, and you can do what we had to do when it was



hot – play under the fricking hose,” when suddenly a woman appeared in front of us in a huge hat, flowery caftan, enormous sunglasses and lots of bling. Looking like a refugee from a Gold Coast resort, she beckoned to us. I crept closer, thinking she was going to abuse me for stalking. “You can have this spot,” she said, and then promptly handed over her parking ticket with an hour still left on it.

I love humans. They are so random. And so very often kind.

Jean Kittson is an Australian performer, writer and comedian in theatre and print, on radio and television. She made her comedy debut at Melbourne’s legendary comedy venue Le Joke in a series of solo performances, and then in the stage version of *Let The Blood Run Free*. Kittson is best known for her performances, particularly as a news commentator, on the ABC1 comedy program, *The Big Gig*, which aired in the early 1990s. Kittson has become a regular guest on ABC1’s *The Einstein Factor*, *The Glasshouse* and Channel Seven’s *Good News Week*. She also had roles in Australian films, *The Nugget* and *Hating Alison Ashley*.

Helen Dwyer, Relationships and Communications
Manager, Hope Street

The Precious Gift of Hope – Andy's Story

Imagine what it's like to not know where you're going to sleep tonight and to have suffered so much rejection and abuse that you've lost all hope and self worth. Well that's how life was for Andy only two years ago. The future looked bleak; he was homeless and living day-to-day from one crisis centre to the next. Everyone had given up on him, they thought he was beyond help; and then he met John. John is a support worker at a semi-supported accommodation program that assists homeless men with the transition to independent living. In spite of the fact that Andy was totally withdrawn and crippled by fear, John had hope for him and accepted him into the program. This stranger had given Andy a most precious gift – Hope!

It's now almost two years since their meeting and Andy is a completely new person. During his time at The Terrace he has gained many life skills, he's also had to face many fears and overcome some huge challenges and John continues to support him throughout his journey.

Andy now works as a cleaner and will soon move into his own place. When asked what he is most looking forward to he says, “I can’t wait to have my own place. I’m especially looking forward to Friday nights, and sitting on the couch with a beer and watching the footy.”

www.hopestreet.org.au



Andy (left) chatting with John from Hope Street

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Thank you for reading these great stories. I hope you enjoyed them and they may have reminded you of great events that have happened in your life....OR inspire you to help others.

Best wishes,

Janice

Janice Davies
Attitude Specialist.

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