

# Look to add a dose of kindness to your daily routine



**CRAIG & MARC KIELBURGER**  
livebetter@globeandmail.com

Craig and Marc Kielburger founded *Me to We* and *Free The Children*. Their biweekly Brain Storm column taps experts and readers for solutions to social issues.

**D**ave Carrol has a poorly kept secret life. By day, he's a pastor in charge of community outreach for Freedom House church in Brantford, Ont. By evening, Carrol dons the red mask, cape and puffy pectorals that turn him into Captain Kindness – a courtesy-crusading local celebrity who's a mainstay at community events.

"Our neighbourhoods can be transformed with kindness," the real-life superhero told us recently.

People flock to Captain Kindness at fairs and festivals to share their latest random acts of kindness. Carrol's favourite story is of a man who chased the superhero in tights down the street to say he had met a man asking for change on the sidewalk that morning and had taken him out for breakfast.

In our ever-busy, heads-down lives, it's easy to ignore the needs of others – or even our impulse toward simple courtesies such as greeting our neighbours, holding doors open or letting a car merge. We require etiquette reminders on public transit to turn our headphones down and surrender our seats to the elderly. On the flip side, extraordinary gestures of generosity we hear about in the media – such as buying coffee for the next hundred people in line – may seem too ambitious to emulate.

Yet even one small action creates a ripple effect. A 2010 study by researchers from Harvard and the University of California provides evidence that

kindness is contagious – that recipients of kind gestures tend to "pay it forward," launching a cascade of caring behaviour.

Maybe that's motive for us all to be someone's Captain Kindness in 2015.

**This week's question:** What act of courtesy will you commit to in your daily routine to brighten someone else's day?

## THE EXPERTS

"Send out one tweet a day complimenting someone in hopes of bringing them a smile. There's always room for more kindness in the online world." – *Chris Read, founder of the website Kindness Canada and CanadianDad.com*

"Take your kids on a kindness patrol. Create a stack of handmade thank-you cards blinged out with your kids' art and various messages, such as: 'Thank you for your patience,' or 'Thank you for your smile.' Stuff your pockets with thank-you notes and

hit the streets together to spot the good happening in your community!" – *Dr. Lisa Ferrari, co-author of Gratitude & Kindness: A Modern Parents Guide to Raising Children in an Era of Entitlement*

"Keep your eyes and ears open as you go about your day, looking for any opportunity to make someone's day easier. It can even be as simple as up-righting that blown-over garbage can, or picking up doggie-doo before someone steps in it." – *Lisa Bendall, creator of the Canadian blog 50GoodDeeds*

## THE READERS

"Say good morning to strangers. Small talk doesn't mean you must be crazy." – *Jacob Rambousek*

"Speak kindly to someone that you see is having a rough day. You never know what others are struggling with." – *Brenda Radatzke*

"Remind our loved ones just how loved they really are." – *theago592*