



# Spread

# KINDNESS



**Junior Council members share how kids can make our world a better place.**

When the 12 members of *The Week Junior's* Junior Council began meeting for the Spring 2025 session, they decided they wanted to use their voices to raise awareness of the importance of being kind—to people, animals, and the planet. They came up with specific ideas, conducted research on the topics, and wrote their stories. We hope their work inspires you to put kindness into practice too! If you do, write to us about it at [hello@theweekjunior.com](mailto:hello@theweekjunior.com).



## KNOW ABOUT THE MANY BENEFITS OF BEING KIND



**By Seraphina, 10, New York**

Offering a compliment or holding the door for the person behind you isn't just polite. Research suggests kindness

can improve your physical and mental health. "Kind acts boost your mood, improve sleep, and even make us more patient," says Dr. Kelli Harding, author of *The Rabbit Effect*, a book about the benefits of kindness. Kindness also keeps you healthy in these ways.

**Less stress.** Doing good deeds for others can decrease the amount of a stress hormone called cortisol, helping you maintain heart health throughout your life. We also get an immunity boost to help fight off illness, Dr. Harding says.

**Faster healing.** When we perform or receive an act of kindness, our bodies release a feel-good hormone called oxytocin, which also promotes healing. Researchers at The Ohio State University found that when people experienced kindness, their wounds healed faster.

**Social connection.** Feeling lonely can increase the risk of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, while also contributing to physical health problems. When you reach out to someone, both of you will feel less lonely. You can make someone feel less alone just by saying hello or offering a sincere compliment. With an adult's permission, you can also make "kindness rocks" with positive messages and leave them in public places for others to find.

## RECOGNIZE PEOPLE IN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY



**By Zina, 9, Massachusetts**

School communities are made up of students, faculty, and many other people with important roles. These include crossing guards, custodians, lunch aides, secretaries, and school nurses. Treating everyone kindly is part of having a secure, welcoming school community.

A crossing guard who works by my school, Emma, took the job to help kids cross streets without worry, even though she has to go to work in the rain or cold. However, some drivers ignore her instructions. "When people are respectful to me and my stop sign, it helps them and their families stay safe," Emma says.

Another way to show kindness to the people who work at and around your school is

to think about your actions. Making people's jobs easier to do is one simple way to show respect. For example, rather than ignoring trash and leaving it for a custodian to clean up, it is easy to throw it in a garbage can. It's also not hard to say "please" and "thank you" to the people you encounter each day.

Emma, the crossing guard, said it brightens her day to hear kids and parents say "hello" or "good morning." On her first day of work, a family surprised her with flowers. You can help spread kindness in your school community with thoughtful gestures like this too. You could also write people in your community a note of appreciation for all they do.

## RESPECT LEARNING DIFFERENCES



**By William, 13, Massachusetts**

Most learning disabilities, including mine, are invisible, which means they're not obvious when people meet me. I have nonverbal learning disorder (NVLD)—my verbal skills are strong, but I process written information more slowly. I get frustrated when kids and adults are impatient if I don't understand something.

I talked to Maura McNamara, executive director of the Neurodiversity Center for Excellence at Curry College, to learn how kids can support friends who have learning differences.

**Be curious, not critical.** We may act or do something in a different way, and that's OK. "Instead of judgment, see someone in a positive light and see what they bring to the world," says McNamara.

**Notice our strengths.** We all want to be valued for what we can do, not what we can't. Music is my passion, but learning to create my own music in Logic Pro has been challenging because of all the steps to create the right sound. My music teacher makes me feel good because he loves hearing my questions and learning how I think.

**Include us.** People with differences can feel excluded. Don't let them stay on the sidelines—ask them if they want to join you.

**Be good to you.** If you have a learning disability, remember to be kind to yourself. "Try to make the world a better place for you," advises McNamara. "Find the people who bring you up."



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LORENA BAYONA



## WRITE ABOUT POSITIVE STORIES



**By Margot, 11, Wisconsin**

I wanted to contribute to a more happy, kind school community, so I asked friends to help me start a school newspaper to help spread stories that include good news. Alexandra Gray, who studies social emotions at Northeastern University, notes that sharing uplifting news has benefits. "It creates a cycle of positive interactions between people," she says, and the impact grows. My friends and I took these steps to start a paper.

**Enlist supportive adults.** We approached our homeroom teacher, who liked our idea to launch a newspaper and directed us to our principal. My friends and I made a slideshow to present our plan to our principal, who was very excited and approved it right away.

**Recruit classmates.** Working on a project together is a great way to build new friendships and strengthen the ones you already have, says Gray. We put up posters to recruit anyone who might be interested in being part of the newspaper staff.

**Explore your options.** There are lots of ways to publish a newspaper. It can be printed, posted online, or sent as an email.

**Choose your content.** We have monthly highlights, puzzles, book recommendations, and a student poll. We also have a "buddy blast," where we feature the fun activities students are doing together.

**Tap everyone's talents.** Some people like to design the layout. Others want to write articles. We support one another so everyone gets to do most of what they want to do.

**Communicate.** Make a plan so everyone can ask questions and have input, and set a deadline so final drafts can be reviewed and ready to publish.



## HELP ANIMALS FIND A GOOD HOME



**By Kiran, 10, California**

Every summer, I go to a camp at my local animal shelter, where I learn different ways to help animals in need. An animal shelter provides housing for animals who are lost, abandoned, or surrendered (given up by their owners). Each year, more than 6 million cats and dogs enter animal shelters nationwide and need to be cared for before they are returned home or adopted. "We want to see a more empathetic and kind world," says Ana Bustilloz of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Los Angeles (SPCALA). "Caring for animals fosters empathy and kindness in the world." Adults and kids can team up to help in several ways.

**Contact your local animal shelter.** Ask what opportunities it has for families and children to support its work. You may be able to assist with feeding, walking, training, and socializing cats and dogs.

**Make posters.** At my camp, we made posters for adoptable pets that staff displayed to help visitors learn about the animals. You could share a similar poster with your friends, family, or youth group. You could also ask the shelter if you could make "How To" posters to advertise the ways kids and families can get involved.

**Meet different needs.** There's tons of laundry in a shelter, as well as office tasks like filing and putting together informational folders about pet adoption. When volunteers do these tasks, shelter staff have more time to take care of the animals' needs.

**Gather supplies.** Ask the staff about the shelter's needs, like collecting pet food, blankets, and toys. You can organize a small drive with a few families or something bigger with your school or a scout troop. Let people know where and when to bring the items.

**Identify and share learning opportunities.** Look into educational programs like summer camp and find out whether you can participate in staffing an outreach booth with an adult at a community event.



## HOLD A BAKE SALE FUNDRAISER



**By Malaika, 13, Virginia**

At my school, we hold bake sales as fundraisers. We have donated profits to causes, like supporting a children's hospital. Here are tips I learned from running a sale.

**Select a cause.** You may already have a charity in mind, or you can ask an adult to help you find one.

**Pick a date.** Ask a teacher to help you coordinate permission to set up a day and time.

**Get the word out.** "Planning a bake sale involves organizing a team of volunteers, assigning responsibilities, setting a date and location,

promoting the event by making flyers, and sending communication home to parents," said Kanwal Shahzadi, a teacher at Washington International Academy in Virginia.

**Bake treats.** Next, ask friends and family members to help bake batches of treats, make flyers and posters, set up, sell items, and clean up. My class created a sign-up sheet, and we suggested that people bake items like cookies, brownies, and muffins. Ask people who bake to bring the ingredients list for their contribution because people may ask allergy-related questions.

**Design a flyer.** Include the date, time, and

location of your sale, along with the fundraising cause. You can make flyers by hand or try using a digital app like Canva.

**Set up!** The week of the sale, check the weather to see if you need to move your location. When you set up, use a tablecloth to make your sales area look nicer. Organize the ingredients lists in a binder or staple them together.

**Make labels for each treat.** Include the name and a list of any dietary concerns, like peanuts or peanut butter, tree nuts, dairy, and gelatin. Finally, add the price. For small treats, you might charge \$1 or \$2. Make sure you bring enough change in cash and coins and plan to clean up well afterward. Also, don't forget to have fun!







## How to...

### MAKE NEW STUDENTS FEEL WELCOME



**By Annabelle, 10, Mississippi**

When I was 6, my family moved to a new town, close to the Air Force base where my dad works. I worried about what to

expect at a new school. Luckily, because my school has many military-affiliated students, it has adopted a student-service program called Anchored for Life. It helped me make the transition to the school, and now I'm a member who helps new kids. Consider these ideas for including new students at your school.

**Be a buddy.** Join or start a buddy program. "A buddy helps new students feel welcome," says Erica Lewis, the Anchored for Life facilitator at my school. "It gives them someone they can go to with questions, like 'How do we line up for the bathroom?' or 'Where do we sit at lunch?'"

**Share school spirit.** When I was new, I didn't have any spirit wear, so my first week, my mom handmade a T-shirt for me to wear on Friday—the day all the classrooms compete to wear the most spirit attire. The next week, a neighbor gifted me a few school shirts, which made me feel included. Ask a teacher about setting up a spirit booth or donation closet for new students.

**Host a meet-and-greet.** Collaborate with a teacher and other students to set up a welcome table at the fall open house or after winter break. Make welcome kits, with a map of the school and info about special traditions for new families, and sign new kids up for a buddy! By pairing up with a new student, you can expand your horizons, learn more about your school, display kindness, and maybe make a new friend!

### START A MINDFULNESS MOVEMENT



**By Isabella, 11, Rhode Island**

Recently, my teachers added activities into the school day, like focusing on our breathing or spending more time outside to

reset before returning to lessons after recess or gym. These activities are part of a practice called mindfulness, which involves paying close attention to your thoughts and feelings, as well as what's happening around you, in the present moment. I noticed that this helped everyone calm down and refocus, which created a more positive environment. "Mindfulness helps children understand their own feelings and the feelings of others," says Mary Phan, a research scholar at the University of Utah. "When we understand how someone else is feeling, we are more likely to be kind." Here are ways to try it at your school.

**Share the advantages.** Tell your teacher or principal about the benefits of mindfulness,



which Phan says include improved focus, problem-solving skills, and resilience. This may help to persuade them to incorporate a few mindful moments into the day at your school.

**Offer ideas.** Share examples of mindful moments, like the "Five Senses Exercise," in which you focus on what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. It could be breathing softly or tasting a delicious piece of chocolate. Whatever it is, letting your mind focus on something positive can help you reduce stress and help you relax.

**Start a club.** You can also ask your teacher or principal about starting a mindfulness club, meditation club, or yoga club. Invite friends to join you, then decide together what activities you could do and when your club would meet.

### RAISE AWARENESS FOR A CAUSE



**By Tyler, 10, Ohio**

When I was 5 years old, I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes (T1D). I didn't know what it was or how much it would change my life, but I learned that more than 1.5 million people in the US have it. Dr. Jamie Wood, a pediatric endocrinologist, says T1D is one of the most common chronic conditions kids can get.

Type 1 diabetes happens when the body stops making insulin, which helps turn food into energy. Without insulin, blood sugar levels get too high and can be dangerous. Kids like me check our blood sugar, take insulin, and are careful about when we eat and when we are active. I've learned that just sharing my story with my friends and teachers helps them understand it, and they're eager to support me and learn about how to help find a cure. Raising awareness for a cause like T1D can include these action steps.

**Wear a ribbon.** You don't have to wait until November, which is National Diabetes Month, to put on a blue ribbon. It's a good way to start conversations and teach others about T1D.

**Sign up for events.** Participating in walks and fun runs or organizing lemonade stands that raise money and awareness helps scientists get closer to finding a cure.

**Share information.** Creating videos, drawing comics, or making posters for school explaining what T1D is can be a great way to involve friends and classmates. Adding facts, like how T1D isn't caused by eating too much sugar, will help clear up common misunderstandings.

**Advocate for change.** Speaking up can make schools better for kids with T1D. I have talked to my teachers, the school nurse, and the school staff about what I need to stay healthy, and they are really supportive. My school makes sure the staff know what to do in emergencies. Dr. Wood says that advocating for these small changes can make life easier and safer for kids with T1D.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY LORENA BAYONA



## How to...

### ORGANIZE A DRIVE FOR FOSTER FAMILIES



**By Gavin, 9, Oregon**

Families with foster children need toys and gear for summer activities but don't always have them. Donation centers that collect items are part of the solution. Here's how you can help by organizing a donation drive.

**Get permission.** Ask a parent, teacher, or community leader if you can hold a drive, and discuss which center you can donate items to. Discuss how long the drive should last. Will it be a one-day event, or can people drop off items over a week or more? You can also set a goal for how many items you hope to collect.

**Find out what's needed.** Be sure to ask the center about the condition the items should be in. "In general, we either take brand-new items or like-new items," says Noelle Zimny of With Love, a donation center for foster children in Tigard, Oregon. Also ask if there is a need for specific items that people don't always think to donate. "We are always in need of water bottles and sippy cups," says Zimny. "We also need kid-sized dishes and diaper cream."

**Advertise the drive.** Tell friends, family, your school, and your community about the event. Make posters that explain the purpose of the drive. Include the details about the location and the dates for drop-off, as well as the requested items. Ask a parent to post the information on social media.

**Collect and give the donations.** Once you have the items, set up a drop-off date with the donation center. While you're there, you can ask about other times of year they especially need donations. You can also plan to make an announcement to thank donors and let them know the drive was a success.



### SHARE TIPS TO BE KIND TO THE EARTH



**By Orion, 12, Minnesota**

When you are kind to the Earth, there are many benefits to animals, nature, and people. I was inspired to learn more ways to help the planet when I went fishing with my family. I noticed every so often that a fish would bite off our fishing line and sink to the bottom of the lake. I found out that lead fishing lures can poison fish and birds, like loons, if they eat them. I encouraged my whole family to start using tin sinkers instead. Changing our fishing habits was a way to show kindness to fish and the loons.

Next, I started thinking about other changes I could make to help the planet. I asked Meghan Bernard, the sustainability manager for my school district, for ideas. She shared these three.

**Bike or walk.** Instead of getting a ride everywhere, consider whether you can get where you're going by biking or walking, neither of which causes pollution.

**Join a club.** Research groups supporting nature in your area, says Bernard. I'm on my school's LiveGreen team. Students work with teachers to solve problems sustainably, like making solar panel kits to send to schools in Uganda that don't have electricity.

**Think about need vs. want.** Before you make a purchase, ask yourself if it's really necessary. "It's good to think about how much you already have, then decide if you're going to buy another T-shirt or not," says Bernard.



### BE AN UPSTANDER FOR OTHERS



**By Lincoln, 11, Virginia**

Being an upstander means standing up for people when they are being treated unfairly or when others are being mean. It's not always easy, but it's the

right thing to do. Sometimes people only defend those who share their background, gender, or race, or only those they are friends with, but real courage means standing up for everyone. We should never be bystanders when we see injustice, according to Omékongo Dibinga, a professor of cross-cultural communication at American University. "Silence helps the bully, never the victim."

That means that if you see something wrong and say nothing, you're actually helping the person who is doing the wrong thing. If we stay quiet, we allow harm to continue. Whether it's drawing attention to unfair treatment or supporting someone who feels alone, taking action can create real change.

Acting as an upstander isn't just about eliminating bullying. It's also about helping in small ways, like telling a friend when their joke goes too far, or reaching out to a teacher about behavior you've witnessed. Dibinga told me that being an upstander means doing the right thing even when it is hard.

In short, everyone has the power to be an upstander. You don't have to be the loudest person in the room or the most popular student at your school. You just have to care and take action when you see something happening that you know is wrong. If we all promise to be upstanders, the world will be a much better place.

