

2019 International Essay Contest for Young People

List of Winners

Theme: "Creating a Society Full of Kindness"

No. of participating countries: 157

No. of entries: 20,657 (Children's category: 7,383 / Youth category: 13,274)

*All ages are as of June 15, 2019.

1st Prize

Children's category (1 entrant)

- *Kindness is Free*
Olutayo Ifedayo Victor
(Age 14, Nigeria)

Youth category (1 entrant)

- *Kind Souls Make the World a Better Place*
Ilia Nikitichev (Age 21, Russia)

2nd Prize

Children's category (2 entrants)

- *Kindness: A Choice*
Maya Amaravathi Sarkar
(Age 14, India)
- *The Kindness We Can See, the Kindness We Can't See*
Tomoya Yamamoto (Age 14, Japan)

Youth category (2 entrants)

- *Kindness- The Vaccine Our World Desperately Needs*
Anusha Pillay (Age 19, India)
- *Long Way to Go*
Md Tawsif Rahman Chowdhury (Age 21, Bangladesh)

3rd Prize

Children's category (5 entrants)

- *It's a Weak Point, and That's Okay*
Kentaro Sugimoto (Age 7, Japan)
- *Kindness Cures Anger*
Tharana Dakshya Rajakaruna (Age 7, Sri Lanka <Living in Japan>)
- *Ich wünsche der Welt Freundlichkeit*
Paul Komary
(Age 8, Italy <Living in Austria>)

Youth category (5 entrants)

- *Hidden Acts of Kindness*
Mari Yoshida (Age 16, Japan)
- *Being In It Together*
Tamaki Okamura (Age 16, Japan)
- *A Society That Values Each Individual*
Moe Itagaki (Age 18, Japan)

- *A Better World by Kindness*
Ignacy Kulczyk (Age 12, Poland)
- *A Kindness Chain*
Rio Nishimura (Age 12, Japan)
- *A Step towards Many Firsts*
Md. Rashed Jaowad Khan
(Age 20, Bangladesh)
- *The Ripple Effect*
Ezeagba Coletta Uche
(Age 25, Nigeria)

Honorable Mention

Children's category (25 entrants)

- Mihai Darius O. Andronescu
(Age 9, Romania)
- Najja Amani King (Age 12, U.S.A.)
- Chisomo Boshoma
(Age 12, South Africa)
- Julia Dreher (Age 12, Argentina)
- Nariaty Abigail Andrade Grijalva
(Age 12, Ecuador)
- Kotoka Yoritsume (Age 12, Japan)
- Sopanha Flair Tan (Age 12, Cambodia)
- Bakare Daniel (Age 13, Nigeria)
- Jiho Yun (Age 13, South Korea)
- Ryosuke Ikeda (Age 13, Japan)
- Andrea Ross L. Sedero
(Age 14, The Philippines)
- Anna Bodnarchuk (Age 14, Russia)
- Caroline Gao (Age 14, U.S.A.)
- Fatima Ezzahra Fattoukh
(Age 14, Morocco)
- Gehna Yadav (Age 14, India
<Living in Switzerland>)
- John Vincent Madera Tiong
(Age 14, The Philippines)
- Liz Georgina Arriaga Vidales
(Age 14, México)
- Mana Fujioka (Age 14, Japan)

Youth category (25 entrants)

- Anghela Karina Amaya Zapata
(Age 15, Perú)
- Balvaneda Rodriguez Diana Itzhamara
(Age 15, México)
- Bea Francine Cruz Isuga
(Age 15, The Philippines)
- Ken Adachi (Age 15, Japan
<Living in England>)
- Nanase Kinjo (Age 15, Japan)
- Rara Miyajima (Age 15, Japan)
- Sang-Ha Chon (Age 15, South Korea)
- Hitomi Iida (Age 16, Japan)
- Kurumi Nishimura (Age 16, Japan)
- Saki Tamai (Age 16, Japan)
- Maggie Wang (Age 17, U.S.A.)
- Nada Mohamed Ali Ragab
(Age 17, Egypt)
- Batbaatar Adiyamaa
(Age 18, Mongolia <Living in Japan>)
- Nandini Mittal (Age 18, India)
- Kazi Anisha Islam
(Age 21, Bangladesh)
- Ernad Mahmic
(Age 22, Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- Caroline Schiller (Age 24, Germany)
- Emily Neoh Gaik Kin (Age 24, Malaysia)

- Rohan Rali (Age 14, U.S.A.)
- Shotaro Fujimoto (Age 14, Japan)
- Sophia Li (Age 14, Canada)
- Tania Lorentzen (Age 14, Russia & U.K. <Living in Italy>)
- Yuito Kusakabe (Age 14, Japan)
- Yuki Iwasaki (Age 14, Japan)
- Toshiaki Takeda (Age 15, Japan)
- Ian Quint Leisner (Age 24, Brazil)
- Kok Jia Xuan (Age 24, Malaysia)
- Luísa de Quadros Coquemala (Age 24, Brazil)
- Lyndsay Francesca Walsh (Age 24, Ireland)
- Ubaka Ifechukwu Miracle (Age 24, Nigeria)
- Vanessa Yamileth Martínez Sarmiento (Age 24, El Salvador)
- Mabeline Yeo (Age 25, Singapore)

Best School Award (1 school)

- Bookers International Schools, Ogun (Nigeria)

School Incentive Award (47 schools)

- Accra Japanese School (Ghana)
- Assumption Kokusai Primary School, Osaka (Japan)
- Auckland Japanese Supplementary School (New Zealand)
- Bunka Gakuen Nagano Junior High School & High School, Nagano (Japan)
- Calamba City Science High School (The Philippines)
- Centro de Bachillerato Tecnológico, Industrial y de Servicios No. 234, Tamaulipas (México)
- Chicago Futabakai Japanese School-Saturday School (United State)
- Chitoku High School, Japan (Japan)
- Colegio San Ignacio, Buenos Aires (Argentina)
- Escuela Preparatoria No. 8, Universidad de Guadalajara (México)
- Fukushima Prefectural Asakakaisei Senior High School (Japan)
- Ghiyasuddin International School, Malé (Maldives)
- Handmaids International Catholic School, Lagos (Nigeria)
- Hiroshima Nagisa Junior High School, Senior High School (Japan)
- Honjo Higashi Senior High School (Japan)
- Hougang Secondary School (Singapore)
- Ibaraki Prefectural Koga Secondary School (Japan)
- Japanese School of Hanoi (Vietnam)

- Japanese Schule in Zurich (Hoshuko) (Switzerland)
- Jonan Gakuen Junior High School, Senior High School (Japan)
- Joso Gakuin Junior High School, Ibaraki (Japan)
- Kaisei School, Shimane (Japan)
- Koka Gakuen Junior and Senior High School for Girls (Japan)
- Kyoto Gakuen Junior and Senior Highschool (Japan)
- Matsumoto Shuho Secondary School, Nagano (Japan)
- Matsuyama Higashi Junior High School of Matsuyama City, Ehime (Japan)
- Mie High School (Japan)
- MITA International School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Nigerian Bioneers (Nigeria)
- Nihon Fukushi University Affiliated High School, Aichi (Japan)
- Nippon Bunri University, Oita (Japan)
- Nobeoka Technical High School, Miyazaki (Japan)
- Okinawa Prefectural Gushikawa High School (Japan)
- Omori 6th Junior High School of Ota City, Tokyo (Japan)
- Otsuma Ranzan Junior and Senior High School, Saitama (Japan)
- Rakunan Junior High School, Kyoto (Japan)
- Rikkyo School in England, West Sussex (UK)
- Satriwithaya School, Bangkok (Thailand)
- Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sri Nipah, Johor (Malaysia)
- Senzoku Gakuen Junior High School, Kanagawa (Japan)
- Showa Women's University Junior-Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- SISA - School of International Studies in Sciences and Arts, Lahore (Pakistan)
- Taisho Elementary School of Omuta City, Fukuoka (Japan)
- Teikyo Junior & Senior High School, Tokyo (Japan)
- Tokyo Metropolitan Mizuho Nōgei High School (Japan)
- Vancouver Japanese School (Canada)
- Waseda Shibuya Senior High School (Singapore)

International Essay Contest for Young People

Panel of Judges:

Chairman	Genshitsu Sen	Former Grand Tea Master of Urasenke, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador
	Shinji Hattori	Chairman & Group CEO, SEIKO HOLDINGS CORPORATION
	Koïchiro Matsuura	President of The Africa Society of Japan, Former Director-General of UNESCO
	Suzue Miuchi	Cartoonist
	Junji Narita	Directo and Senior Advisor, Hakuholdo Inc.
	Masami Saionji	Chairperson, The Goi Peace Foundation
	Akira Suzuki	Language educator
	Shunichi Tokura	Composer
	Kazuhiko Yazaki	President & CEO, FELISSIMO CORPORATION
	Shomei Yoh	Picture book author

Organized by: The Goi Peace Foundation

Endorsed by: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan,
Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, Japan Private High School
Federation, Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education,
Japanese Broadcasting Corporation, Nikkei Inc.

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Kindness is Free

(Original)

Olutayo Ifedayo Victor

(Age 14, Nigeria)

Bookers International Schools, Ogun

No one noticed or even cared when the richest man in my community died. Everyone went about their normal way of life. It was as if nothing had happened at all.

On the day of his wake, there were only nine people in the ornate hall rented for the event, even his sons and the clergy of the community failed to show up. He was a man feared for his ruthlessness, and once boasted that: ‘Kindness is shown by the weak, to the weakest folks.’

He left a terrible legacy and people were happy after his passing.

Interestingly, two months later, another man died in the same town and I remember getting back from school and it was as if the world was ending. I’ve never seen such a crowd of mourners. Hundreds of people gathered in the heavy rain wailing, and it was the darkest day in my town.

Okafor was a wretched man who had lost his legs to a disease as a child but what the man couldn’t make up with his legs, he did with his sunny smile. He pivoted his weight on a skating board on which he hurtled around with his popular broom and cutlass. Okafor swept the entire streets of the community for free and cut the grasses, and all he cared about was a little alms or gifts from the people. He was always there cheering school children, encouraging and telling them jokes. Wherever Okafor was there was so much joy and laughter. He was the man without legs who helped school children cross the roads and the one who assisted the elderly with their loads. He was the guy without legs who inspired the young footballers to work harder so they can bring the state trophy back home.

Even when he was dying from tuberculosis, he showed so much life, and spoke glowingly to people, encouraging and assisting them. He was a pennilessness man who gave more



than any millionaire in the town. Okafor wasn't really noticed when he was alive but his importance was discovered after his demise. His burial was attended by thousands. Even the king of the community came and so did some politicians. They were puzzled and thought Okafor was a wealthy man but were shocked when they realized they'd come to the funeral of a homeless man who possessed nothing.

Few months after his death, the bushes along the roads grew back. The snakes terrorizing the people returned. During a heated debate in the community hall which was often cleaned by Okafor, a snake fell on the head of the market leader, making everyone flee. An elderly woman who Okafor often help cross the road was killed by an overspeeding motorcycle popularly called 'Okada' in my country. Okafor had left a big vacuum that needed to be urgently filled. And I was one of the people who volunteered to help. A half-day of cutting at grasses made me realize that Okafor did what he did out of sheer love and kindness and not for the offerings given by few people. His effort was well beyond the pittance he received. And it was as if the death of a man without legs threw the entire community into total chaos and breakdown.

Since I'm too young and don't have the extreme physical energy possessed by Okafor, I started an 'Okafor Memorial Group: OMG' whose sole job is to replicate the kindness of the late cripple. Made of thirty-one children, we delegate ourselves to handle chores according to our ability and energy during the weekends. We've also raised some little donations and are working with the community leaders to build a library in the honour of this unlettered man. And we've been so successful that I know Okafor where ever he is will be extremely proud of himself and us.

Asked why he showed kindness to everyone around him, Okafar would say:
"I shaw kaindnas to da pepi, coz even a lion shows kindness to its kind."

And these are words written on the library walls; a reminder of the kindness of a man who'd lost everything yet gave the world so much kindness.

2019 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – 1st Prize]

Kind Souls Make the World a Better Place

(Original)

Ilia Nikitichev

(Age 21, Russia)

Kursk State University

Kindness has been around me for as long as I can remember. For me, it is not about pompous words, but acts that others did for me.

I have had health problems all my life, but my mother has always been there to support me. Her constant care is but an inexhaustible source of kindness and care.

I had to undergo many surgeries on my bones and doctors surrounded me in orthopaedic centers. Not only were they experienced and kind, but their work was nothing short of heroic. When time came for me to go to school, I felt care and attention from my teachers as well. I was home-schooled and the teachers were giving me not only knowledge, but part of themselves too. They tried to make my studying exciting so that I did not feel lonely.

Sometimes I attended classes with others and met my friends. Thanks to their kind hearts, I always received a great jolt of energy to keep on going.

I will never forget the times when back in primary school I attended a drama club created by an amateur actress for special children. She came to our little studio on her day-off and shared her acting experience with us, put us into a magical world where we were the main characters, but most importantly, our faces lit up with happy smiles.

After I graduated from school with good marks, I went to university and enrolled in the department of foreign languages. I have been studying linguistics there for three years now. During my first year there were no access ramps on the campus for me to enter the building easily. However, the rector did not stay indifferent and the entrance was reconstructed presently. The ramp now serves well to students with disability who have an opportunity to



access the university building, to learn and to achieve professionalism. For me, it was a great act of kindness.

During my time in college I was very lucky to meet my mentor. She helped me a lot with tricky parts of learning a language and she also guided me through my research and creative work. She was not given any overtime pay. She did it out of her kindness, because she wanted me to become a good translator. I am enormously grateful to her for this. I hope that I will be able to fulfil my goal and turn into a skilled professional.

All the kind attitude inspired me to give kindness to others. A lot of people led me to it: my parents, relatives, friends and teachers. My competence by now allows me to create something truly useful for others. So I thought, 'What can I do?' Surely, I can do translations! I searched the Internet for some volunteer translation projects that may be beneficial to others and found out about the Unique initiative proposed by the Russian branch of Rare Chromosome Disorder Support Group. A team of socially responsible students would translate medical booklets about rare chromosome disorders, as well as some comic books for ill children, from English to Russian. I joined them. I was excited to give assistance to ill children that would be within my powers, as these children and their families need information about their diagnoses in their native language. Through those translations I want to help people with chromosome disorders to speak of themselves to the world, to support their families and provide them with necessary information. As the booklets are published, I see that my work was not in vain. This year a total of sixteen booklets and comic books were published. Every participant of Unique committed themselves to making the lives of people in difficult situations more hopeful and joyful.

I got a lot of kindness and happiness from others in my life, but I think it is much more pleasant to repay people with joy as it resonates within your heart much stronger. Let us shine with kindness from our hearts, for when our hearts are bright, the whole world will become kinder.

Kindness: A Choice

(Original)

Maya Amaravathi Sarkar

(Age 14, India)

Kodaikanal International School

Kindness: a word that evokes different images in peoples' minds. In mine, an unpleasant memory from my early years. I remember my friend bullying a classmate of mine, taking off his glasses and throwing it against a wall. She pushed him to the wall and walked away. I looked down, too afraid to meet the boy's eyes. More than afraid, I felt ashamed. Ashamed to call this girl my friend. I watched the boy pick up his glasses and walk towards our classroom.

"Are you okay?" I asked, sympathetically.

"Yeah," he replied, "I'm...fine. Don't worry about it. I don't really care what she does to me." He walked away before I could say "I do".

I wanted him to know that he was not alone. It had only been a month since he joined the school, and he was already having a tough time.

Later, I asked her why she bullied that boy, and she shrugged like it was no big deal. I guess she didn't realize that, just like one small act of kindness goes a long way, one rude or mean gesture can also have a lasting impact. I grew increasingly distant to this 'friend', and with this, the boy became one of my closest friends, whom I could trust with anything.

My internal response to this incident, and many others I witnessed, intrigued me and provoked much thought. What can we do to make society a better place? I realised what many have come to understand: kindness is like a ripple. One small act creates more, causing a community to erupt with smiles, laughter, and compassion. I want to be the stone thrown into the water, causing that kind of ripple.

Likewise, bullying is also a ripple, where people impact others with their own negative experiences. To stop these ripples from expanding, I need to cause an even stronger and more influential ripple of kindness within the community.

For a long time I kept questioning myself; why would someone fuel hatred and disrespect instead of friendship and kindness? I realized that everyone has a choice to be

who they want. They could bully and be the cause of someone's pain. They could also choose to watch and do nothing while someone is suffering. Alternatively, they could be the person who stops this action and breaks the cycle. They could resist the strong pull towards the 'darkside', and choose to make other's lives brighter, even if difficult and inconvenient. Going the extra mile to do something for others is rewarding in itself. For me, this decision was easy and I chose to be the person who helps others, though I sometimes end up being a helpless witness.

To be completely honest, being kind is often exhausting. When the world seems to be against me, I get bitter and wonder what use it is to be nice to anyone. I lose interest in making others' days brighter, and focus on my own dark and cloudy day. I have found that, though I am kind to someone, they may never return the favour. I now realize I shouldn't expect something in return. When someone shows kindness, it should be from the heart, knowing that it may not come back to them. The real pleasure is the feeling of warmth after helping someone.

However, it takes will-power and strength to be kind. I find myself growing tired and cranky when under stress, making it harder to be kind to somebody. That is why it takes commitment to continue the chain of kindness, to ensure that the cycle of spite is not perpetuated. I feel, to make a real impact through kindness, I must create a like-minded group that promotes deliberate acts of kindness wherever possible. We would support each other, to prevent the feeling of isolation in an endeavor of kindness, to remove the sting when kindness is met with viciousness, and to help each other remain constant in kindness. It is this consistency that makes a difference; a conscious choice to be the ray of sunshine in a dark cavern, and illuminate it. Only then can we see the impact of our actions.

The Kindness We Can See, the Kindness We Can't See
(Original in Japanese)

Tomoya Yamamoto
(Age 14, Japan)

Yamanouchi Junior High School of Yamanouchi Town, Nagano

My hometown is Yamanouchi in Nagano Prefecture in Japan. As the site of the Shiga Highland UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, our town aims to be a place where human beings and nature can coexist in abundance. We also concentrate on achieving human rights, peace, and social welfare. Maybe for that reason, I felt that I wanted to do something for the good of my town.

The year I entered junior high school, Yamanouchi Junior High was accepted into the UNESCO Associated Schools Network. In school we work on ESD (Education for Sustainable Development), and in the student council, we run activities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In my first year (Grade 7), I joined the Community Outreach Committee, which focuses on activities related to social welfare, human rights, and peace. I am still active with the committee today.

I would like to share with everyone the thoughts I had about 'kindness' in the context of the Outreach Committee's activities.

In April of my first year, when I first joined the committee, our project was collecting plastic bottle caps. Every Wednesday and Thursday morning, we gathered at the school entrance. We collected not only bottle caps, but also empty aluminum cans and old stamps. Each week, we measured the weight and the number of items we had collected, and announced it to the school. This work was surprisingly hard and I was quite tired, but at the same time it made me happy and gave me a sense of accomplishment to see how much we had collected. The plastic bottle caps were donated to help pay for vaccines for children around the world. The aluminum cans were sold, and at the end of the school year the money was used to buy walkers for the

elderly or other equipment, which we donated to a local seniors' home. When we received a letter of thanks from the elderly people at the home, it made me so happy... I felt that I had been able to do even a little something for the good of the town.

Our next activity was 'heartwarming lunch letters'. The town's Welfare Council made box lunches for elderly people living alone, to help brighten their spirits. Our group wrote letters about our school life and attached them to the covers of the boxes. We used nice handwriting and wrote many letters to send the elderly people good feelings. In May, the school principle presented the responses to this activity. The elderly people said that we helped put them in good spirits, and that the content of our letters was wonderful. When I heard this, it renewed my fondness for this activity.

The last example I want to share is an activity where we collected miswritten postcards to raise money for prosthetic legs for people in Rwanda. In the winter of my first year at junior high, Gatera Rudasingwa and his wife Mami, the directors of the Mulindi/Japan One Love Project, came to give a talk at our school. From 1990 to 1993 there was a civil war in Rwanda, and large numbers of people were massacred, while many others lost arms and legs. Gatera and Mami are continually making prosthetic legs for people who lost their legs in the war. At the beginning of their talk, I was just listening casually, but as I became absorbed in it, I felt a strong sense of dread and a hatred of war. At the same time, I also felt great respect for these two people who have been making prosthetic legs.

After the talk, I wondered if there was something we could do to help in their work, and that's how we started collecting miswritten postcards. The Community Outreach Committee steadily collected the postcards up until the fall of my second year, and then we sent them to Mr. Rudaswinga. Later, we received a reply that they were able to make a prosthetic leg for one person. Our activities had reached beyond Japan's borders and helped someone in Rwanda. Needless to say, this gave me great joy and a real sense of accomplishment.

Through these activities, I realized that there is kindness we can see, and kindness we can't see. The walker we donated, the lunch letters we wrote, and the prosthetic leg that was made—these are kindnesses we can see. What supports these acts of kindness is the day-to-day thoughtfulness of each individual. Even though we can't see the results of our thoughtfulness right away, I hope to continue holding this kind of thoughtfulness in my heart.

Kindness- The Vaccine Our World Desperately Needs

(Original)

Anusha Pillay

(Age 19, India)

National Institute of Technology, Raipur

“Tenderness and kindness are not signs of weakness and despair, but manifestations of strength and resolution”- Kahlil Gibran

The dictionary defines kindness as the quality of being friendly, generous and considerate. Kindness, to me, is about living by the principles dear to one’s heart and leading a life of integrity. Ethics, compassion and empathy are the bedrock of kindness. Kindness is also about treating yourself the way you would treat those you care about, because a person’s behaviour and attitude towards herself determine how she approaches other relationships.

Reading this essay topic set me thinking, because kindness is so underrated and hardly talked about these days. In the rat race of the 21st century, kindness has been trampled underfoot. And this is sad because, I believe, kindness makes the world go round.

Performing the ten acts of kindness was a real eye-opener for me as I realised that these little things are so simple to do, yet neglected by us more often than not. At the same time, I recalled countless instances of people being kind to me, that I had either not recognised or not been grateful for. The friend who consoled me when I burst into tears after losing a badminton match and was too ashamed to face my teammates. A lady I had never met before, who pinned up my ‘saree’ for me- it was my first time wearing the garment and it was getting undone. Kindness still exists, but we don’t value it as much.

As a society, we tend to place greater emphasis on attributes like intelligence, beauty, wealth, neglecting values like kindness, compassion and understanding. In India, and in other countries, the education system focuses solely on marks. Instead of helping our children grow into thoughtful and considerate adults, school and college test and reward only academic knowledge. This frenzy for higher marks is further whipped up by parents. No wonder that cut-offs for top colleges in India routinely reach 99 and even 100 per cent!

The solution is to integrate value education with the regular school curriculum so that the

children of today are balanced and well-rounded adults tomorrow. What they are taught in childhood leaves an impression on young minds forever. It is we who need to change our attitudes. Wealth and material success are not the only measures of a life well-lived. Very often, it is a little act of kindness, a kind word, the simplest of gestures that can make all the difference. In a poignant Reader's Digest article, the narrator is reminded by an apparent stranger of a long-forgotten incident. The latter had attempted suicide, but was saved by the narrator. Twenty-five years on, he is grateful for that act of kindness.

We can create a kinder society by just slowing down a little, by reflecting on what really matters in life and concentrating on the good around us. There is a lot that is wrong with the world, but there is a lot that is good and beautiful in it, too. There is good in each one of us, and when we recognise that, we may be a kinder society. One cannot really know what another person may be going through- for example, a sales assistant may be rude or unhelpful because he is unwell or has lost a loved one- so one must strive to be kind to everyone at all times. As Plato said, "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle".

Another step to create a society full of kindness is to perhaps rely less on technology and more on our basic human instincts. With the astounding technological advances in the new millennium, our world, as we knew it, has changed. However, we humans have not really changed. A little kindness and a bit of warmth are something we still need. Greater connectivity but ironically less actual contact between people is one reason why our society is in dire need of kindness.

We must join hands to create a society full of kindness. Being kind costs nothing. Yet, it can change a person's life forever. In Anne Frank's immortal words-

"No one has ever become poor by giving".

Long Way to Go

(Original)

Md Tawsif Rahman Chowdhury

(Age 21, Bangladesh)

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology

In my country, the biggest achievement of someone's life is to leave the country. It is quite ironic as it sounds. But it is the reality. I am an undergraduate student. I am currently pursuing my B.Sc. degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. I come off a middle-class family. We are leading a well-established life here. Still my parents are hopeful that I will finish my graduation and try to have a scholarship and leave this country for good. Since my childhood, I also have possessed the same dream.

I live in my university dormitory. There is a local market beside it. One morning, I was having my breakfast there. While I was having my breakfast, an old man of around 60 years came to the shop. He started to wash the dishes. I thought him as a normal employee who worked in the shop. Suddenly I observed something irregular. He had a polybag with him. He didn't just wash the dishes but also filled his bag with the leftovers from the dishes. It was quite unusual for me. So, I got interested in him. I initiated a conversation with him.

This old man was a random homeless person living in the streets of Dhaka. He had this deal with the food shop that every morning he can take the leftover foods. In return, he had to clean the dishes. Every morning this old man, who can barely walk due to his age comes in this shop and collects whatever he can. Then he takes this food to his sick wife who can't even move after having a heart attack last year. He also has to take care of a daughter who is mentally unstable and whose husband left her due to her sickness.

Can you imagine what this old man was going through? I don't think you can. I don't think anyone can. I don't know if it is bad luck or something, but I definitely know that this old man is not alone. There are millions of people in this world just like him.

There are lots of great souls who have devoted their lives to make this world a better place. But it seems like we are always being outnumbered. Some of the privileged people are trying to be kind but it is never enough.

There is a war in Yemen. A severe humanitarian crisis is going on there. There are the

Rohingyas leading inhumane lives in the refugee shelters in Bangladesh. There are consistent famines and food, water crisis in a huge part of Africa. There are millions of homeless people all around the world. We have come this far in this civilization, yet a huge number of people in this world don't have access to basic medical care. Children all around the world are dying due to malnutrition because of excessive poverty. There are people who pass days without even eating proper food. The world is witnessing an extreme refugee crisis.

Now is the time we ask ourselves. We have to ask ourselves if this is the world we want.

I asked myself. The answer was clear. I don't want to live in this world. I definitely have to change it. But I have to be rational. For now, I can't help the children in Africa or help the people in Yemen. But I can help the old homeless man I met in my breakfast. I can't just dramatically change his life, but I can be kind to him. I can help him as much as I can. I can motivate other people to come forward with kindness. Today, I can help one poor family. Together we can help millions. We don't need all the wealth in this world to help the underprivileged, we just need to be kind enough to come forward.

That's when I knew that I don't want to leave my country. I knew that I have to be here and try my best to build a society full of kindness. And to accomplish that, I have a long way to go.

It's a Weak Point, and That's Okay

(Original in Japanese)

Kentaro Sugimoto

(Age 7, Japan)

Kosaka Elementary School of Kanazawa City, Ishikawa

"Good morning."

"..."

"Good morning," I say to my friend in the classroom. But my friend just smiles. My friend isn't good at talking in front of other people. So, he often goes quiet and looks like he doesn't know what to do. Even when I talk to him, he doesn't answer, and sometimes it makes a big question mark appear over my head.

I usually talk too much, so at first, I couldn't understand how my friend was feeling. But we sit near each other in class, and when we line up by height I stand in front of him, so pretty soon we were always together. Now, during long recess breaks, my friend and I play tag together. First, I'm 'it' and I chase him and tag him, and then we take turns being 'it' and chasing each other. Sometimes, when the two of us are running around, other friends join us, and we all play together.

That's when I remembered a picture book I read last year during summer vacation, called *Du Iz Tak?*, where bugs talk in their own bug language. The first time I read it, I couldn't understand what they were trying to say, and I didn't think the book was interesting. But as I read it a few more times, I could tell from the bugs' expressions and movements what they were feeling and saying.

When we try to guess someone's thoughts and feelings, we usually just pay attention to their words. But as I spent more time with my friend, little by little, I could tell what he was feeling by looking at his face. I think it's important to pay attention not only to someone's words, but also to their expressions and movements when we try to understand their feelings.

The way I think of kindness is, when someone is not good at something and needs help, we understand their feelings and quietly help them. Everyone has different strong points and weak points. When the people around us understand that something is difficult for us and give us help, we don't worry about our weak points so much. I might have a hard time, too, if there's something I am not good at. But at those times, I'm sure that someone will notice how I feel and give me a hand. That's why I want to become someone who can understand the feelings of the people around me and quietly help them. I hope that by helping each other with our weak points, we will create a society that is filled with kindness.

Kindness Cures Anger

(Original)

Tharana Dakshya Rajakaruna

(Age 7, Sri Lanka <Living in Japan>)

Global Indian International School – Tokyo

Many afternoons when I walk to the bus stop after school, a boy from my class come running behind me and pinch me. He does the same inside my classroom and on the corridor. When I ask him to stop, he ignores me. Two girls from my class stretch their legs when I walk and trip me. They say bad things about me. When I ask them to stop, they ignore me.

Their bullying hurt me; it made me confused, sad and really angry. Their bullying made it difficult to concentrate in the class and I started failing in my studies. That made both I and my teachers upset and angry. Teachers complained to my parents. That made both I and my parents sad and angry.

I asked my mother why those students are unkind to me. She told me that they do it because they are sick. She said their sickness is anger. When I asked what could cure their anger, she said the cure was loving-kindness. She said that Lord Buddha has preached so: "hatred can never be appeased by hatred; it can only be appeased by loving-kindness".

I am originally from Sri Lanka. My mother told me how suicide bombers attacked churches and hotels in my country. There were more fights after the bomb blast, because people were angry with those who planned the attack; they attacked the attackers. My mother helped me understand how one unkind act of anger lead to more bad feelings, making so many people hurt and angry. I saw how anger created more anger.

So, how can kindness save me from the people who hurt me? How can we use kindness to stop the people who make bombs? I tried to be kind to the bullies, and play with them. At the same time, I reminded myself to see them as sick children. If they were sick, then I should be kind to them. When I forced myself to see them as sick children, my anger reduced. With my mother's help, I told myself to feel sorry for them. This helped me not to be angry and concentrate better on my studies. That in turn helped me to gain my teacher's approval and made my parents happy.

So, kindness is not about stopping people who are unkind. It creates a kind society by stopping anger from spreading. When I stopped feeling angry, it stopped my teachers and parents from feeling angry. Just like me, if people from Sri Lanka practiced kindness, they also could stop anger from spreading. That would have created a kind society where they could solve their problems in kind ways.

What about the students who bully me? The bullies had groups of friends who supported them. My mother told me that it was the same with the angry people in Sri Lanka. They also had groups of people from many countries that supported them. If that support was not there, one person could not have done it.

So, people should stop supporting angry behaviors, if we want to make our society kind. But, this is not what is happening in the world. Many countries are fighting with each other. A lot of people, including children, die everyday because of such fights.

We have a big responsibility to create a kind society by refusing anger. I helped to make that society by asking my parents to ask my class teacher to stop the bullying and by making new friendships with students who were also bullied. My parents talked to my class teacher; my class teacher advised those students not to disturb me. My new friends helped me to deal with the bullies. I helped them to deal with those who bullied them.

Kindness is the best cure for the anger in our world. Kindness helps kind people, making them happier. It also creates more kindness; when I was kind to my new friends, they were kind to me. So, I believe the best way to create a kind society is for each one of us to be kind, to be the kind person we want others to be.

Ich wünsche der Welt Freundlichkeit

(Original in German)

Paul Komary

(Age 8, Italy <Living in Austria>)

Es ist nicht leicht, freundlich zu sein. Manchmal scheine ich von gemeinen Leuten umgeben zu sein. Sie alle runzeln die Stirn und haben es eilig, irgendwohin zu gehen. Ich lebe in einer großen Stadt und jeder ist mit irgendetwas beschäftigt, kümmern sich nur um sich selbst. Die Menschen in der Stadt sind oft mürrisch. Es gibt immer etwas zu bemängeln, wie das Wetter ist zu heiß oder zu kalt, die Straßen sind schmutzig, die Luft ist verschmutzt oder das Leben ist hart. Die Leute denken, wenn das Leben hart ist, kann es auch schwer sein, freundlich zu sein. Ich bin 8 Jahre alt, aber ich kann es verstehen.

Als ich in die Volksschule kam, wurde mein Klassenkamerad von zwei großen, älteren Jungen gemobbt. Ich sprang ein und sagte "Hör auf!". Einer von ihnen versuchte mich ins Gesicht zu schlagen, hat aber stattdessen meine Brille erwischt, die den Korridor entlang flog. Meine Brille ging kaputt, aber die Schläger hörten auf. Ich habe es meinen Eltern nicht gesagt, aber sie haben es trotzdem herausgefunden. Dann habe ich später gehört, dass Mobber meistens viele Probleme zu Hause haben.

Ich glaube, dass Freundlichkeit zu Hause beginnt. Ich glaube, wenn wir die Gesellschaft verändern wollen, sollten wir zuerst mit uns selbst beginnen. Große Dinge beginnen mit kleinen Dingen. Und die kleinen Schritte beginnen zu Hause. Meine Eltern erinnern mich immer daran, freundlich und hilfsbereit zu sein. Anderen gegenüber großzügig zu sein, aber mit Vorsicht und Grenzen. Sie versuchen, mir Beispiele zu geben, denen ich folgen soll, aber manchmal mache ich auch meine eigenen Wege.

Eines Nachts sah ich meine Mutter schweigend im Zimmer weinen. Sie war traurig und besorgt über die Gehirnoperation meines Vaters. Ich wusste, dass ich nicht viel tun konnte, aber ich gab ihr ein Glas Wasser und tröstete sie, indem ich sie so oft umarmte, bis sie sich besser fühlte. Ich versprach auch, mehr zu Hause bei den Hausarbeiten und beim Aufpassen auf meine kleine Schwester zu helfen. Als sie mich anlächelte, wusste ich, dass sie sich besser fühlte und dass ich mich auch innerlich gut fühlte.

Also fing ich an, mehr gute Dinge zu Hause zu tun, wie mehr aufzuräumen, ein paar

Blumen im Garten zu pflanzen, ihr beim Einkaufen zu helfen und meiner jüngeren Schwester gegenüber netter zu sein. Ich denke, das ist freundlich. In der Schule teile ich etwas von meiner Jause und Snacks mit den anderen Kindern. Und wenn ich während der Lernstunde meine Hausaufgaben schnell erledige, versuche ich, den anderen zu helfen, besonders in Mathematik. Ich denke, das ist freundlich.

Letzte Ostern habe ich an einer Ostereiersuche teilgenommen. Ich habe zwei Eier gefunden. Aber nach der Jagd weinte ein Mädchen, weil sie keine Eier fand. Also gab ich ihr eines von meinen. Im Bus und in der U-Bahn gab ich einem alten Menschen und einer schwangeren Frau meinen Platz. Ich denke, das ist freundlich.

Ich habe einmal eine Fliege auf dem Boden in einem Einkaufszentrum gefunden. Ich nahm die Fliege und legte sie unter einen Busch, damit niemand darauf tritt. Ich mache das auch mit Spinnen, die ich in unserer Wohnung finde. Ich lege ein paar Samen für die Vögel in unseren Garten zum aufpicken. Ich denke, das ist freundlich.

Ich spiele für meinen Opa gern Klavier. Er ist ziemlich alt und krank und ich möchte, dass er glücklich ist. Ich sage ihm, dass ich Arzt werden möchte, damit ich mich um ihn, meine Oma, meine Eltern, meine Schwester und viele andere Menschen kümmern kann. Er lächelt und bittet mich, wieder Klavier zu spielen.

Einige Leute denken, dass es nicht einfach ist, freundlich zu sein. Das kann wahr oder falsch sein, aber es ist wichtig, dass wir es zu Hause, in der Schule und im Alltag auf unsere eigene Weise versuchen, auch wenn das Leben mal schwer ist. Auf diese Weise ist unser Leben in der Gesellschaft besser und wir werden bessere Menschen in einer besseren Welt voller Freundlichkeit.

I Wish for a World Full of Kindness

(English translation)

It is not easy to be kind. Sometimes I seem to be surrounded by people who frown their forehead and who are in a hurry to go somewhere. I live in a big city and everybody is busy with something, only looking after themselves. People in a city are sometimes sullen. There is always something for them to complain about, the weather it too hot or too cold, the streets are dirty, the air is polluted or life is hard. People think if life is hard then it is also hard to be kind. I am 8 years old, but I can understand them.

When I started elementary school, my class mate was mobbed by 2 older big guys. I helped him and said "Stop it". One of them tried to push me in my face but only caught my glasses which slid along the school floor. My glasses broke but the guys stopped. I did not tell my parents but they found out anyway. Later on I heard that bullies often have many problems at home.

I believe that friendliness starts at home. I believe that if we want to change society, we should start with ourselves. Big things start with small things. And the small steps start at home. My parents always remind me to be kind and helpful. To be generous towards others but with cautiousness and boundaries. They try to give me examples which I shall follow but sometimes I also go my own way.

One night I saw my mum crying silently in the room. She was sad and worried about an upcoming brain surgery of my father. I knew that I could not do much but I gave her a glass water and embraced her so often until she felt better. I promised to help more at home and to look after my little sister. When my mum smiled at me, I knew she felt better inside herself.

So I started to do more good deeds at home, to clean, to plant flowers in the garden, to help buying groceries and to be kind towards my younger sister. I think that is kind. At school I share my snacks and sandwiches with other kids and when I am quick with my homework during tutoring hours I try to help others, especially in math. I think that is kind.

Last Easter I participated in an egg hunt. I found 2 eggs but after the hunt a girl cried as she had found no egg. So I gave her one of mine. In the subway and in the bus I gave my seat to old people or pregnant women. I think that is kind.

Once I found a fly on the floor of a shopping center, I took her and put her under a bush so that nobody would step on her. I do the same with spiders whom I find in our apartment and I give seeds to birds in our garden. I think that is kind.

I play the piano for my grandpa. He is sick and quite old. I want him to be happy. I tell

him that I want to become a doctor so that I can look after him, my grandma, my parents, my sister and many other people. He smiles and asks me to play the piano again.

Some people think that it is not easy to be kind. This can be true or wrong but it is important that we try it at home, at school and in daily life, in our own way, even if life is hard sometimes. Doing so our Society can become better and we will all become better people in a better world full of kindness.

A Better World by Kindness

(Original)

Ignacy Kulczyk

(Age 12, Poland)

Szkoła Podstawowa nr 1 im. Janusza Korczaka

To be kind to my friends is not quite easy. I with my friends are a football team – there is one boy that is a great goal keeper and I am a striker. After the match, we usually sit on the benches and talk. The goal keeper often swears. I do not like his behaviour, but I do not want to leave the team. There is always a lot of fun. I was thinking a lot how to point out to the team member that he should not speak this way. “Hey, stop saying bad words” - what if he laughed at me...? Recently, he even made fun of our glasses-wearing friend that he could not follow the ball. I was very sad and when I looked at my friend, I saw tears in his eyes. He said he must go home. I did the same. It was no longer a good match. The next day, I told everybody that whoever offends anybody or says any curses will get a red card – just as in a real football match. Some friends laughed, but everyone agreed with the rule. The goal keeper had to sit on the benches soon because he broke the rule. He was bored and kept repeating sorry. Our team decided to give him a second chance. The goal keeper stopped being bad-behaved and now he and the glass-wearing boy are good friends. I realised, I am not alone in that I fear I could be bullied if I spoke up. Nobody is cruel forever, but if we keep quiet, bullies will not change. To speak up requires courage, but thanks to it, an enemy becomes a friend.

During winter afternoons, I make a lavender tea for my mother and my sister and I serve special coffee for my father and my brother. I put an orange and cloves on the tea saucer. I decorate frothed milk coffee with cinnamon, so it forms “daddy” or “Niko”. Then, I turn on their favourite music. I try to make a luxurious experience for them and I think the idea of doing something really big for somebody is what motivates me. I imagine the smile of that person. I also noticed one interesting fact – the more kind I am, the kinder the people are for me.

But sometimes, helping others is especially difficult because I cannot be around all the time. It was the case with my granny, who suffers from Alzheimer disease. She is always

looking for something, for example her keys or her wallet and she is angry with her disease. It happens so often that I learnt where she usually puts her things. I can easily find them. When I go to school, my aunt stays with my granny. My granny is often impatient and feels hopeless. I came up with an idea. I bought chips and installed them on my granny's keys and wallet. When I am not at home, my aunt can simply press a button on the controller and then, the chips make a sound. My granny can find her lost things and she has a big smile. I felt proud when my aunt thanked me although I did not do anything special.

The person who makes truly special things is my mother. I thank her for making tasty breakfast, giving me sandwiches with Nutella. There are so many times I am grateful for her and I want her to feel appreciated. I suppose she feels so, because she repeats to me and all people around that the kindest thing I do to her is saying "thank you". I think the society can improve in the same way like it is in my family. It is just one word but it means a lot!

Naturally, a society means me and my family, and my football friends, and their families, and all of us on Earth. Let's speak up when somebody suffers, make gifts, thank those who give them to us and help others whenever we can – it will come back to us. Kindness is the force that make it happen.

A Kindness Chain

(Original in Japanese)

Rio Nishimura

(Age 12, Japan)

Senzoku Gakuen Junior High School, Kanagawa

I like people who are kind. When I am with a kind person, I somehow feel at peace. I'm sure this does not apply only to me. Anyone who comes in contact with a person's kindness gets a warm feeling from it, I think. Therefore, I would like to try and be kind to more people.

To carry out ten acts of kindness, I did things that I consider to be friendly and generous. When people thanked me for the things I had done, I began to feel how great it is to be kind to others. On my way home from school, I decided to give up my seat on the train to an elderly person, since I thought it was a kind thing to do. I had given up my seat several times before, but each time it took courage to do it. This time, I got up my courage and offered my seat, but this person scowled at me and said "That's all right." Up until then, I had thought it was normal that when you were kind to someone, they would be grateful to you, so I was disheartened by this person's response.

Even after I got home, that incident was all I could think about. Why did that woman reject my offer? Did she dislike the kindness I showed to her? As I was having these kinds of thoughts, I realized that, in the first place, I didn't know the meaning of the word 'kindness,' so I looked it up in the dictionary. When I looked up 'kindness,' it said 'being considerate.' When I looked up 'considerate,' it said, 'showing thoughtfulness and compassion toward others.' The definition of 'thoughtfulness' was 'thinking about what is good and helpful for the other person.' With this understanding, I realized that what I had thought were acts of kindness were not really acts of kindness after all. In carrying out my ten acts of kindness, I had hardly been thinking of the other person at all. It

didn't matter who I was kind to, as long as I could carry out the action. When I looked back on it, I realized that even though the person on the train was elderly, she was also very healthy-looking, so I probably didn't need to offer her my seat.

Understanding the definition of 'kindness,' I realized that there are many kind people all around me. People are concerned for me, people listen to me, people lend things to me—there is no end to the things people have done for me. An act of kindness is not done to satisfy oneself, but to make someone else's day better. I say this because, when others are kind to me, I feel that they have made my day better.

To create a society full of kindness, I think we need to recognize the kindness we receive from others, and take up our own acts of kindness. Because I'm still in junior high school, it's hard for me to have an effect on society as a whole. But I can have an effect on the people around me. When I receive kindness, I feel that I want to give the same kindness to others. I imagine that other people feel this way, too. If we create a 'kindness chain,' passing kindness from one person to another, we can warm the hearts even of people we don't know. Also, when we notice small kindnesses, our hearts become warmer than if we had not noticed them, and that warmth can have a positive influence on our surroundings. It may not lead to a society full of kindness right away, but I think that doing what I can do is the first step to a society full of kindness.

Hidden Acts of Kindness

(Original in Japanese)

Mari Yoshida
(Age 16, Japan)

Urawa Akenohoshi Girls' Senior High School, Saitama

There is a part of me that is a bit shy and reserved. That is, it is difficult for me to practice kindness toward others. When I see someone who's having trouble, I want to give them a hand, but it requires a great deal of courage for me to actually do so. Going up and speaking to someone, figuring out what I can do to help them, carrying it out, and even getting thanked for my help all make me feel awkward and embarrassed. I'm sure it's because I don't want to be seen as a hypocrite, and I don't want to be the object of people's attention. If more and more people have the egoistic view that only those who can practice kindness without any hesitation or timidity should do so, it will make for a savage, violent world, and we won't be able to create a society that is filled with kindness. However, I think there are many people like me who want to practice kindness but feel ashamed that they can't put it into action.

That being the case, I had the idea to change the way I perceive kindness. Originally, 'kindness' means having consideration for others and showing warm, tender feelings. So, if we respond to people's actions with thoughtfulness and understanding, that can be called kindness. When it comes to putting kindness into practice, the existence of considerate feelings is, in itself, an act of kindness. Even if others don't see it as an act of kindness, and even if we aren't thanked by anyone, if we acted with thoughtfulness and understanding, we can call it kindness. For a reserved person like me, this type of kindness is much easier to practice.

To begin, I focused on doing something simple. I bring a lot of things with me to school each day, and I walk with my backpack slung over both shoulders. I'm more comfortable with my bags on both shoulders, but I end up taking up the space of three

people. Preoccupied with the weight of my bags, I haven't been thinking of anything else when I walk. But now, when I ride the escalator, I turn my body sideways, so that my bags are placed in alignment sticks out a little in front and a little in back. And when I walk on the road, if I sense that a bicycle or a fast-walking person is coming, I move my bags to my inside hand and hold it in a way that takes up less space, so that the bicycle or person can pass me without any problem. This is an act of kindness that shows consideration for other people using the road, even though the other people don't notice my kindness, and don't thank me for it. This small kindness prevents the unpleasant feeling of bumping into my bag, and keeps people from getting annoyed when they cannot pass by me.

There is great power in words, both good and bad. Positive words give people a happy feeling, while negative words bring unpleasant feelings. Sometimes, when having a conversation, we get on a topic that only concerns us, and we end up saying things that the other people find unpleasant. Even when talking about trivial matters, it's no good if we're the only one enjoying the conversation. I think it's important to have conversations that everyone in the room can enjoy. Ideally, we should talk about things that interest the other people, and use words filled with positive energy. Before we say something, or when we're in the middle of a conversation, we should try to stop and consider: *If I say this, how will the other person feel?* It's difficult to do this in all of our everyday conversations, but I would like to try and show kindness by being thoughtful toward the people with whom I'm talking.

The act of kindness that I carried out might be very small and have little influence on anything. However, it is this type of kindness that I want to continue putting into practice. These small acts of kindness are different for each person, and I think that when each person practices small acts of kindness, our efforts combine into one very big kindness. In a society filled with small acts of kindness, people's apathy and indifference will decline, and the small acts of kindness will accumulate, eventually leading to large-scale kindness. Within me was born the intention to show even a little bit of kindness and consideration toward others. If many other people have this same intention, I believe we can realize the vision to create a society filled with kindness.

Being In It Together (Original in Japanese)

Tamaki Okamura

(Age 16, Japan)

Ritsumeikan Senior High School, Kyoto

We know that kindness means helping to resolve someone's difficult situation. I felt this all the more strongly in relation to my grandmother, who lost her will to live after my grandfather died last year.

My grandmother is eighty-six years old. After getting married, she continued working, and she remained independent both mentally and physically. But despite this, I was surprised to see that, after my grandfather died, she became very gloomy and was complaining all the time. We brought her meals, helped her to deal with my grandfather's things and take care of her daily needs, took her out to the movies and on excursions, and looked for hobby groups that she could join. But far from accepting these things cheerfully, she often rejected them. Our attempts at kindness didn't work on her at all.

While she was taking care of my grandfather, my grandmother talked about her hopes and plans, saying, "When I'm free, I want to do this and that." So, why did she become so listless? My view is that when she was caring for my grandfather, even though she felt restricted, it gave her energy for living. Now, she no longer had that energy and willpower. Perhaps human beings cannot be truly content when they spend their time and effort only for their own enjoyment. If so, I thought, then maybe the kindness I can give to my grandmother is to fulfill her inner desire to feel needed by others.

It takes several steps to make an elderly person like my grandmother realize that she is more than someone who needs to be cared for. First, I began holding regular gatherings with other women in the neighborhood who had recently lost their husbands. They would share their feelings and talk about how they were doing at

present. The purpose was to make them feel that, even though they were living alone, they had friends in the same situation.

After a few gatherings, the atmosphere became more relaxed, and I asked a question of the group: In Japan, even in old age women are the primary caregivers, so how does it feel when you suddenly find yourselves alone? It is quite a hardship for an elderly person to care for and lose another elderly person, so it would be a waste, I thought, not to draw on their experiences.

For example, when a woman is caring for her elderly husband, someone from social services comes to check on their physical condition and mental state, and both the husband and wife can feel that people are concerned about them. But as soon as the husband passes away, no one even makes sure that the wife is alive, let alone looks after her condition. If she doesn't have any relatives nearby, then she suddenly finds herself all alone. And yet, this issue is not well recognized in society. When I explained it in this way, everyone was able to feel that there is value in sharing their experiences.

After that, I explained how to post these experiences on an online blog. I have always thought that social media and other networking tools are especially useful for people who are physically disabled or constrained in some way, and it was with this in mind that I had created 'Grandma's Blog' a few years earlier. At that time, although my grandmother didn't show much interest in it, I posted pictures of the green peas ripening in her garden, and wrote about topics like new exercises at her seniors' swimming class. Over time, I had created a collection of posts that were heartwarming to look back on. Now, when I showed them to my grandmother, she not only felt joy in looking back at her life, she was also surprised to see that people she did not know personally had viewed the blog posts thousands of times, and sometimes even left comments. The other women in the group were also keenly interested in it, and said it was like a big wall poster that people can read and write responses. Then, they put forth the idea to make the blog not just a record of past memories, but a way to share what it's like for elderly people after they have cared for and lost a loved one. Everyone's face came alive!

Human beings may seem separated by differences in age, gender, and circumstance, but in reality, it is just that our situations are a little bit different, and there is no distinction between givers and receivers of kindness. In everything, I think, it's important to get involved, remembering that 'we are all in it together.' In order for

more people to realize this, I want to enthusiastically recommend creating a blog to share the experiences of our grandmothers and our elderly neighbors. There are some issues to consider, such as connecting to the internet, but it is interesting to think about these issues together. It gives us a real sense of being in it together, and for me, that is a new definition of kindness.

A Society That Values Each Individual

(Original in Japanese)

Moe Itagaki

(Age 18, Japan)

Yamagata Johoku Senior High School

When I saw that the theme of this essay was ‘kindness,’ I immediately thought of the kindness I felt when I was in elementary school. We often speak superficially, saying things like, “That person is really nice,” but the kindness that I experienced was the real thing—a kindness that warms you deep down in your heart.

I was in Grade 6 of elementary school. My grandfather, who had raised me from the time I was very young, was diagnosed with cancer. My grandfather had always been there to listen to my stories, and had always supported me. I loved my kindhearted grandpa, and he was my emotional bedrock. Due to the effects of the cancer, my grandfather, who was a big man, rapidly lost weight, and he became unable to do various things. I was full of anxiety and loneliness. When I looked at my grandfather, now thinner, lying on his futon, I realized how much human beings can change, and it gave me a strange feeling. I didn’t even know what to say to him.

At that time, I met the nurse who came to provide home care. The nurse cleaned his body and carefully warmed his feet with hot water, and I was impressed to see how skilfully she handled him with such care.

Then, the nurse spoke to me: “What’s your grandpa like?”

The nurse also took time to listen to my grandmother, who was taking care of my grandfather. She talked about my grandfather’s youth and what he was like as a father and husband. She talked about his friendships and hobbies. I could feel both my and my grandma’s hearts becoming a little lighter.

As the nurse was leaving, she said, “You can contact me after hours, too. If there’s any problem, or if something doesn’t seem right, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.”

The nurse wanted to know a lot about my grandfather, and she valued and cared about him. She also wanted to relieve the anxiety my grandmother and I were feeling. From the nurse, I felt compassion and profound kindness.

After that, my grandfather's condition worsened, and he was hospitalized. A short time later, he fell into an unconscious state. I was thinking about how I would never talk with him or see his smiling face again, gazing at him with an empty feeling, when the doctor in charge came in. The doctor praised my grandmother for how she took care of him, and my family for their cooperation. I could feel how the doctor's words calmed the tension in the hearts of my family members.

At 5:10 am, my grandfather was confirmed dead. The doctor conveyed the news to us in a solemn, quiet voice, and when I looked at him, I became calm and was able to accept my grandfather's death.

From the time my grandfather fell ill, both the nurse and doctor showed concern for us, his upset family, and they treated my precious grandpa with great care. Ever since then, I have continued to be moved by their kindness. I have strongly felt that I want to be kind to everyone in my life, keeping in mind that each person is precious to someone.

When I was in junior high school, I had a friend in my class who was distressed and just could not come to school. At that time, I remembered the words the doctor had spoken to my grandfather: "You don't have to endure this. We can take away your pain."

I couldn't do anything about my friend not being able to attend school, so I set my mind on relieving the loneliness and anxiety that my friend was feeling. I would go to my friend's house to tell her what was happening at school and bring messages from school, and I would talk with her and send her emails. I think those words from my grandfather's doctor helped me to come up with this idea.

When I thought about what would make for a society full of kindness, what came to mind is a society where each individual is valued and cared for. Just like the nurse and doctor who treated my precious grandfather so well as he went to the heavenly world, I too would like to face each individual in my life with great care and respect. In that way, I hope to become an adult who can create a society full of kindness.

A Step towards Many Firsts

(Original)

Md. Rashed Jaowad Khan

(Age 20, Bangladesh)

Khulna University

This middle aged man was lying on the street and groaning in pain. Several people were standing around that poor soul quietly. The man was explaining what his problem was however those infirm words could not move a muscle of those by watchers. Even some people left the place leaving the ailing person. I just got out of my home for my class and that incident drew my attention at the first sight. So I approached the man and asked what his problem was. The man has sudden testicular pain on the street and that was why he could not move a bit. So I asked him if I could do any help right at that moment. He said just getting him to his home would be just fine. I requested the people around to find a rickshaw (a local vehicle) and they brought one. I lifted the man and some other people gave their hands of help by picking up the baggage he was carrying with him. I paid the rickshaw fare and instructed the rickshaw driver to take the man to his destination. Other people also gave some advice to that rickshaw driver. After the rickshaw left I asked a person beside me how long did the man remained like that there. He answered about half an hour. I nodded and left the place for my class to attend.

To me, kindness means an act of empathy and cooperation towards any other living being without any expectation of getting acknowledgement in return. Kindness can be expressed in a lot of forms of actions. The experience I shared above is quite common in our country. Generally when a person gets in trouble for instance accident, sudden illness, mugging or inappropriate behavior from others, people do nothing but watch the incident without helping the person in need. They just watch until a Good Samaritan walks in to help the person. "Why should I care for someone else when I have my own matters to take care of?" it is the thought of average person. It hurts me a lot to see my society like this. I always dreamt of a society where the philosophy "one for all and all for one" gets advocated and practiced. The way I figure out the solution is the lesson I learnt from the aforementioned incident I experienced one month ago. That is, somebody has to take the

first step to trigger the soft side of heart of other people. It is more of a psychological initiative than a social enterprise. Everybody has a kind heart yet what everybody does not have is the courage of taking someone else's responsibility on his shoulder. Just for this reason, a lot of people go unaware of the heavenly experience of helping someone out. So I, along with some of my friends took an initiative to make our society a kinder place not only for human but also for other living beings,

"The First Step Society." Here we share our acts of kindness that we did in the previous week with each other in a weekly session. And the feedback was enormous. Every week more and more people started to join us. Some of the noteworthy acts of kindness our members shared with us so far are giving water to policemen maintaining traffic in scorching heat of sun in busy roads, randomly pick up beggars or street kids on their way to restaurants to have lunch or dinner together, establishing a "Wall of Humanity" where people leave their things which they don't use anymore and those things are taken by those people who might find them useful, rescued and hospitalized an electrocuted person, setting up small pots of water at the edge of the windows of high storied buildings for birds in the hot summer days and many other wonderful experiences. These acts might seem small but remains as a strong icon of humanity inside our heart. People are overwhelmed and they come to our session to take light from other kind-hearted people and rekindle themselves with kindness for all living beings. A little first step for a better future!

The Ripple Effect

(Original)

Ezeagba Coletta Uche

(Age 25, Nigeria)

“If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives, be kind anyway. Incorporate the smallest acts of kindness into your everyday life and notice the ripple effects” – Mother Therese.

When I was a kid, I was told that I was too generous and that people are always going to hurt me because of my kind nature. As a teenager I restrained from generosity and become more eager to receive than to give.

Gradually, I noticed that I was no longer the happy and expressive person I used to be. Something was missing, but I wasn't sure what it was.

One morning, on my way to the bank, a pregnant woman mistakenly hit the head lamp of the taxi I was in, breaking it into pieces. The woman screamed at the taxi driver “What a reckless driver you are!” Everyone around the scene told the man to collect some money from the woman for repairs, but the man quietly came out of his car and assessed the damaged headlamp. Then he looked at the heavily pregnant woman with compassion, returned into his car and drove off. The woman stood there astonished.

At the bank, I was on a long queue; there was a power outage for over two hours. Customers were tired of the delay and began shouting at the cashiers, except a woman- the same person who had hit the taxi. She said “No, you guys shouldn't judge them based on your opinions. These are the same people who attend to us every day when things are going fine. Let's treat them the same way we want others to treat us.”

At that moment I became startled, I thought, “What would have been this woman's response if the taxi man had insisted that she should pay for the head lamp? What a ripple effect!” From that moment on, my definition of kindness changed. Kindness means treating other people the way we want to be treated and leaving people better than we meet them knowing that just like a ripple effect, that kindness will be transferred to another person directly or indirectly.

As I came out of the bank that day, a friend of mine told me about the Goi Peace

Foundation Essay Competition, and I was amazed when I saw the theme – “Creating a Society Full of Kindness.” When I started my research, I came across Mother Therese’s quote “Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s Kindness: Kindness in your face, Kindness in your eyes, and Kindness in your smile.” Eureka! I have become more intentional about smiling everywhere I go, and continue to research more ways I can be kind. I have visited the hospital, encouraged the sick and given them more reasons why they should live. My friends and family have noticed the change in me. They have joined me in the movement. I formed a group of 20 people called “The Kinder Circle” in my community. We agreed that we would smile to at least 5 people every day , including strangers, we would make at least 5 people smile by giving them a genuine compliment, and lastly we would encourage and give a listening ear to at least 2 people every day. It has produced such a ripple effect. In less than three months, we are already a group of 100. I’m currently writing a book “A Kinder World”. I’m going to release it to the public in August 2019. I want to reach out to more people whom are not in our Country. I believe that with this movement we all can create a kinder world.

I have recently noticed that the feeling of joy I lost when I was growing up is fully back, and I have learnt that giving money and gifts are not the only ways to be kind. I am just like a ripple effect. I’m changing the world around me with the act of kindness. Everybody can do it. It does not cost a penny.