

Dear Jack Canfield,

I was a rather selfish, lonely teenager until March of seventh grade. This is when I read your book, *A Second Helping of Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Within that book was the story that changed my life. It was entitled "Practice Random Kindness and Senseless Acts of Beauty." When I read how a woman spreading love changed a life, I was hooked. My eyes filled with tears at the beauty that people were willing to share. I immediately wanted to be a part of their journey, so I joined the Rachel's Challenge Club at my school.

This Rachel's Challenge Club focuses on spreading love and kindness. We made bulletin boards to spread the message for the rest of the school year. Sadly, I became the only member when I returned to school as an eighth grader the following year. Remembering the story, I decided to advertise the club so we could run a drive raising goods for troops. The advertising caused two more members to join, and we three ran the drive, receiving over 100 items for the troops. With such a good outcome, we then started a change drive that lasted for two weeks. It raised \$394 for two town residents whose houses had recently caught fire. By this time, our club had grown to seven members.

The interest in sharing happiness spread like wildfire. Students began holding doors open for others, and being kind to those who had previously been ostracized. The faculty started up a respect program they called "IR2". A food drive was held, with a result of 400 pounds of food. Our whole school had completely changed! The Jaffrey Rindge Middle School went from having low test scores, being on the bad school's list, and a horrible reputation, to having several of its students honored in the local paper. This story showed me the beauty in a poor town, the love of students with little time to see their parents. It opened up a whole new world for my peers and me, and we greatly appreciate it. What surprised me the most, however, was the reaction of the community. They started running fundraisers, also! And for the first time, the sixth graders were not teased in school! To this day it amazes me how much just one story, one little act of kindness, can change the world.

This story changed me, also. Instead of focusing on my needs and problems, I reached out to help others. By doing so, more and more people became friends with me, and I was given more and more tasks to perform after school. One such task was making "IR2" bulletin boards in the special education room. This gave me the opportunity to see the challenges special kids face, and to see how strong they really are. Not to mention I made three very special friends by the names of Mrs. Ratcliffe, Mrs. Hutchinson, and Mr. Anderson, teachers in that room.

Mrs. Ratcliffe, Mrs. Hutchinson, Mr. Anderson and I went on to become great friends. With their support, in three months I made seven huge bulletin boards by hand, all spreading the message of love, kindness, and respect. Do not credit me with these wonderful happenings, though. Please, credit yourself for allowing the author of love to share her story. Thank you for writing your book, and including the story that changed so many lives forever.

Sincerely,

Melissa

**Melissa Schill, Grade 10
Holy Name Junior/Senior High School, Worcester**