

By Heidi Heydlauf

There's a lot ugly stuff going on in the world, including the US..... two wars, unending gun violence, houselessness, the food insecurity that 13% of the people in the US live with, the nastiness of our Presidential. election year, and so on and so on. But, when I stop to pay attention, I see that - even while all that ugly stuff is going on - many people of goodwill are doing kind things. So, just as I began to do in the heart of the COVID pandemic, I'm going to keep track of some of those acts of kindness, and record them in this edition of my Climate of Kindness report.

- Eight ESOL students from China surprised me with a small gift, a lovely card with sweet messages, and hugs before class. This was all in honor of the start of the Lunar New Year.
- Kids in a local elementary school made and delivered cards in person to residents of a senior living facility in honor of Valentine's Day. The kids are part of Cupid's Crew, an organization that nationally encourages intergenerational connection for seniors.
- A teen Lego fan was bothered by the fact that so many pieces from old sets end up in landfills. He came up with a plan to collect old pieces to create Lego sets he could donate to charities. His idea became so popular that participants from 38 cities around the globe now contribute pieces to make those sets. Among the recipients of those sets are children's hospitals.
- The newsletter published by a local facility that provides hospice care, including to folks who are unable to pay for the service, reveals the deep respect and caring that is given to individuals in the process of dying there. There are certainly paid nurses and aides working at the facility, but there are also 190 volunteers working there, which makes providing charitable care possible. In the next newsletter that is written following a person's death there is a warm write-up that clearly reflects how much the staff worked to honor the preferences of the deceased while they were receiving care at the facility.
- Rather than waste all of the valuable wood from the hundreds of trees that fell down during the recent winter storm in Oregon, a lumber company plans to use the wood in environmentally friendly ways. Some of their projects will specifically be intended for low-income people.
- Some recovering addict "peers" are volunteering in Portland to work with police to help addicts on the street. The peers provide snacks, warm socks, and other material things to the folks on the street, even as they talk with them about getting into treatment. Of course, these recovering peers can talk to the addicts with the voice of understanding that others don't have. If they're willing, the addicts are immediately driven to treatment centers by the peers.
- My ESOL students are so openly appreciative about my efforts to help them speak English better, that it inspires me to keep volunteering to work with them. In addition to saying "thank you," many have made statements like "you

have a good heart," "you are so kind to volunteer," "you are so young because you have so much love in your heart," etc.

- I commonly meet friendly folks on my morning walks, , regardless of what route I take. Today I met 4-year-old Oliver, who was waiting in his driveway as I walked through his cul-de-sac. His Dad had stepped back into the house for a minute after starting the car to take Oliver to pre-school. I said "good morning" to Oliver, to which he promptly replied "Good morning. What's your name?" We chatted a bit about school and dinosaurs, and how proud he was that he could open his home's front door. . When I said goodbye, and that I'd see him again sometime, Oliver promptly replied "I forgot your name." I told him, and then he said "I'll see you again sometime, Heidi." Oliver obviously has a warm heart.
- While going through my rarely used e-mail account that is used only by my immigrant students, I found a sweet New Year message from a Ukrainian physician I taught over a year ago. Last fall she reluctantly made plans to return to Ukraine to be with her sick mother. This same student had sent me a sweet July 4th message, saying "FREEDOM IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING." What a kind-hearted woman she is, which I find especially notable, given the intense stress she lives with.
- While many people were seated and enjoying conversation and snacks after a church services, a kind woman quietly went among the tables to collect their dirty dishes to take to the kitchen. This spared the very busy kitchen crew many trips to retrieve those plates and eating utensils before washing them. The thoughtful woman hadn't been "assigned" to do this; she simply did it to be helpful.
- A woman who's busy with her career and being a wife and mother has volunteered weekly at a homeless shelter for a year, preparing and serving meals.
- This same woman who works at a shelter for houseless people also volunteers in a program for seniors with pets. Once a week she delivers pet food and supplies to their home, then once a month she transports seniors ' pets to a vet clinic that provides free service. Hats off to her and her community for providing such a fine service.
- In Ohio a program called the Furniture Bank gives indigent folks much-needed furniture to move into an apartment. Many of the people they serve were previously homeless. Larger pieces of furniture that won't fit into an apartment are sold, with the proceeds going to support the Furniture Bank's mission. Obviously the bank needs donations from local citizens to make their system work. My Ohio cousins donated a lot of furniture to the bank when downsizing to a smaller home. A Google search shows that there are similar programs throughout the US.
- I am lucky to have the Muslim Educational Trust (MET) in Tigard. Yes, it has a K-12 school for Muslim kids who don't go to public school. But it's done many things over the 30 yrs. it's been in Tigard to extend goodwill and

kindness to people of all ethnicities and faiths. I've attended a number of their "bridge building" sessions with various minority groups, and with law enforcement personnel. Now an Hispanic organization that MET has helped sponsor is giving MET a special award for its ongoing efforts.

- A few years ago Auburn's basketball coach heard about a 12-yr-old boy who was struggling with leukemia and its treatments. The coach sent the boy a video in which he gave the boy a tough coach-like pep talk. That video helped the boy endure some nasty side-effects from his disease and treatment. Eventually the coach came to meet the boy in person. He told the boy that he knew the boy was going to beat that disease, and then he should come to Auburn and be the coach's assistant. The boy is now an Auburn student, delighted to be the team's manager.
- For several decades AARP has run a free nationwide tax preparation program that is open to both members and non-members of all ages. The AARP volunteers that make this program a success have all gone through IRS-certified training to be sure they are up on current tax laws. IRS research has shown that these trained volunteers submit more accurate tax filings than CPAs do! The program and its volunteers have provided millions of people with this valuable service.
- A family-owned cafe in the area provides soup once a week to the end-of-life care facility I've begun to volunteer with. What a thoughtful thing that family is doing for dying people and their loved ones, and for the staff who doing that priceless hands-on care
- Prior to becoming a dedicated Special Education teacher, a young woman had been trained as a hair stylist. The mother of one of her students mentioned that her son, Mason, could never sit still to get his haircut. Because she had Mason's trust as his teacher, the young woman thought she could successfully cut Mason's hair as part of a demonstration for her class. Mason's mother approved of the idea. Mason got his haircut, and the teacher arranged for him to walk on a red carpet for the class as a celebration. Now she is considering opening a hair salon that serves folks with special needs. What a kind heart she has!
- A food truck owner in Washington is a recovering addict. These days she regularly provides free food to hungry indigent folks who stop by her business.

No doubt the presidential election process will be especially ugly this year, and more innocent people will be killed by war and via mass shootings. There will continue to be unsettling news all around us. But, as is clear in the list above, there are MANY people of goodwill all around us, too. I will keep my eyes and heart open to see and hear about them to maintain my sanity in the months ahead.