

Library Lines Column

By Ruth Gilbert, Youth Librarian at the Kirkland Town Library

February 17 is Random Acts of Kindness Day. When was the last time you did something nice for someone else, just because? If your family needs some ideas, check out randomactsofkindness.org. You'll also find quotes, videos, and stories about kindness that can help inspire you to act.

A good book may also help your kids feel empowered to do something generous. Here are some great reads from your local library!

"Each Kindness" by Jacqueline Woodson and E.B. Lewis. This is a somber picture book with a powerful message: don't waste an opportunity to be kind because you might not get another. The main character of the story doesn't speak up when the other girls in her class tease a new girl. One day the teased girl stops coming to class, and she feels regret that she never showed the new girl any kindness and would never have the chance to again.

"I Walk With Vanessa" by Kerascoët. This wordless picture book is a great conversation starter for kids when they look at the pictures and interpret the story in their own way. The illustrations show a new girl, Vanessa, being introduced to her class and then walking home alone. Along the way, another girl from her class sees Vanessa being bothered by a bully. The next day the other girl joins Vanessa on her walk to school, and inspires other children to join them.

"Tomorrow I'll Be Kind" by Jessica Hische. This picture book uses simple text and cute animal people to show examples of ways to be kind, patient, gentle, and honest. Perfect for preschoolers.

"Sorry (Really Sorry)" by Joanna Cotler and Harry Bliss. An adorable and humorous book that shows the ripple effect of being not-so-kind. Cow finds herself in a bad mood and takes it out on Duck, who then is nasty to Frog, who passes on the unkindness again. The whole farm ends up in a grouchy mood until someone finally decides to apologize.

"A Sick Day for Amos McGee" by Phillip C. Stead. This sweet picture book tells the story of Amos McGee, a dedicated zoo keeper who spends time with each of his animal friends every day. He plays chess with the elephant, sits quietly with the penguin, and reads the owl stories. When Amos doesn't come to work one day, all the animals take a bus ride to his house to take care of him the same way he takes care of them.

"Wonder" by R. J. Palacio. This middle-grade novel has become a modern-day classic. It tells the story of Auggie, a middle-schooler with a facial difference who is attending public school for the first time. He deals with bullies, new friends, and new experiences with an open heart and inspires his classmates to do the same.

"White Bird" by R.J. Palacio. This moving graphic novel is about a Jewish girl named Sara and the story of how the kindness of one family helped her survive the Nazi occupation of France during World War II.

“Stargirl” by Jerry Spinelli. Another story of a new girl in school, but this time the setting is high school. Stargirl wears weird clothes, brings a ukulele to school, and does random acts of kindness for everyone. Her new classmates aren’t sure what to make of her, but she enjoys some short-lived popularity before most of them decide to turn on her. “Stargirl” shows us what it means to stay true to yourself and believe in kindness, even when the people around you don’t.