

Kindness is a Noun

By Kathryn Tatnall, Youth Service Librarian

Last week I was browsing through a trade magazine while ordering books and ran across an article about Mister Rogers and his radical kindness. The article was written by author Matthew Cordell to introduce his recent book, "Hello, Neighbor! the kind and Caring World of Mister Rogers." I love Mister Rogers. My children and I grew up watching him daily on PBS. I was disappointed to find that I had not ordered Cordell's book when it came out in May. An issue I quickly remedied by putting a copy of it in my cart to order this month. But reading the article got me thinking about kindness. Did you know kindness is a noun? It means "the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate." I always think of kindness as a verb because it usually involves doing something for someone. I was struck by the fact that it is a noun, it's a thing. It's a thing we learn and, hopefully, practice. Here are some books from the children's collection to help teach and remind your children to practice kindness.

For the Pete the Cat fans, Kimberly and James Dean created, "Pete the Cat's Groovy Guide to Kindness". In this story of the coolest cat on the planet, Pete shares some of his favorite quotes with his young readers on sharing, helping, and having a heart for others. Because kindness is cool!

In "I Walk with Vanessa: A Story About a Simple Act of Kindness" by Kerasocot, a young girl witnesses a bully making the new girl, Vanessa, feel awful. Saddened by what she sees the young girl explains the incident to friends. She then spends the evening at home coming up with a plan. To help Vanessa feel accepted and welcome they all walk to school with her the next morning and include her in all the day's activities. This story is told without any words at all. The pictures tell the tale through actions and emotions so beautifully and clearly drawn that even the youngest reader can understand the message.

"Finding Kindness" by Deborah Underwood is a lovely story that celebrates kindness through a community effort to make it a daily practice. Whether it's soup for the sick or an ice cream cone for one who's taken a tumble, the concept is normal every day acts of kindness. The simple prose and charming graphics make this a wonderful teaching tool for everyone.

One of my favorite stories about kindness is "Superbuns!" by Diane Kredensor. Believe it or not, Buns is a superhero with the incredible power to be kind to everyone. Of course her older sister, Blossom, refuses to acknowledge that being kind is a super power. Blossom should know. She knows everything. Until the day that her own super kind powers evolve!

I wasn't really looking for anything other than picture books, but a junior fiction called "Captain Superlative" by J.S. Puller came up in my search. Seventh grader, Janey Silverman, is trying to stay well in the background at Deerwood Park Middle School. And her plan of being just "plain Jane" works until she encounters a mysterious student who comes running into the middle of a bullying incident. Red mask, blue wig, silver swimsuit, torn tights, high tops and a cape...who but Captain Superlative would wear an outfit like that in Deerwood Park? And why is Janey drawn to everything Captain Superlative does? Do random acts of kindness make you a superhero? As Janey befriends Captain Superlative the answers become clearer, but they may not be the answers Janey wants to hear. The author does a wonderful job of reminding us of what kindness looks like as we get older and our world view grows.

For more suggested reading on kindness, or any subject, give us a call. Better yet, stop in and see us. We are here to help!