

Chicken Soup

for

Friendswood ISD

Kindness.

Kindness is something we receive a “thank you” or “that is so nice” or “how kind” when we share one. Kindness is something that is given without any expectation of receiving anything in return. But sometimes it comes back years later, and that’s what happened to me.

As principal of a junior high, you sometimes find a student who needs more than a smile or a word of encouragement, and a young lady just like that came into my life. She was in eighth grade heading down a very wrong road, from my perspective. She was bright and showing great potential, but a boyfriend was not being a positive influence. Of course, she couldn’t see that. Make-up and the way she dressed changed. Knowing her dad was her caregiver and worked long hours to provide for her, this was not what he wanted for her. Seeing the change in her from an outgoing, vivacious seventh grader to the reclusive second semester eighth-grader was sad.

As it would be, she broke her wrist and couldn’t participate in PE. God opened a door. After talking to the PE teacher, we decided she could spend her PE time working in the office. That wasn’t comfortable for her. Think about the persona she was working to portray to her “friends”: tough and uncooperative. PE was every other day for ninety minutes. That’s a good chunk of time to build a relationship. Over the four weeks of healing, we started to talk as she worked. We talked about the years before and how I could see a difference in her. She shared about her family and how lonely she felt. We developed trust and, from my perspective, it felt so good to help someone. She gave to me as much as I gave to her. Principals don’t get that opportunity often. She healed and went back to PE. We continued to keep in touch as I let her know I was not going to disappear. Being an eighth-grader, she was high school bound, and we lost touch. I didn’t see her for years.

Those years changed in my life with retirement and being elected to school board. One of the privileges school board members get is to participate in graduation. The ceremony was over, and I hear someone calling my name, loudly and more than once. You guessed it: the eighth-grade student was now a graduate. She hugged me and shared some beautiful words about our time together years ago. Learning she was headed for nursing school and life beyond gave me such joy.

Yes, she gave me a huge gift and most of the time we don’t get the opportunity to know the impact of our kindnesses. But sometimes we do. And it is still great “Chicken Soup for my Soul” to always be aware of the needs of others. You do make a difference: big or small.

-Rebecca Hillenburg, FISD Board of Trustees Secretary