



# Young Hearts

Teens and youth in Collier and Lee counties commit to thousands of acts of kindness.



LEFT: CHARITY FOR CHANGE'S "GIVER" AMBASSADOR RALLIES STUDENTS AT A YEAR-END ASSEMBLY. RIGHT: ACTS OF KINDNESS ARE RECORDED ON A BAR GRAPH.

Offering readers a way to help create a kinder, gentler world by sponsoring the "Be-The-Change-Challenge," an inspirational project promoting acts of kindness throughout the community, *è Bella* encourages readers to ask themselves, "How can I make a difference today?"

Be-The-Change-Challenge speakers have addressed a multitude of area clubs and businesses to raise awareness about the project and encourage residents to take the "30-Day Acts of Kindness Challenge" in which each person commits to one act of kindness each day for a month.

The project has been well-received by many civic organizations, but most gratifying has been the response from our youth.

Members of the high school Key Clubs in Lee and Collier counties responded by committing to 690 personal acts of kindness, as well as volunteering to spread the word about the project. Students participating in the Naples-based Junior Women of Achievement (mentored by the adult Women of Achievement) committed to 660 acts of kindness. These young leaders, taught from an early age that kindness and compassion are important pillars in life, are leading

the way in making a difference in our community.

One of the most exciting projects was undertaken by Charity for Change, a Naples-based nonprofit

dedicated to teaching children about giving, volunteering and positive character traits through its School "Giver" Program. A shared goal of the Charity for Change program and *è Bella's* Be-The-Change-Challenge is teaching and encouraging pro-social behavior in the schools.

To that end, Charity for Change President and CEO Karen Conley teamed up with Director of Programs Rachael Bridger and school liaisons to implement a 30-day "Giver's Acts of Kindness Challenge" in six Collier County elementary schools. Their efforts have generated more than 3,600 acts of kindness!



**PARTICIPATING  
SCHOOLS INCLUDED:**

- Calusa Park Elementary School  
— Katy Rogers, kindergarten
- Rhodora J. Donahue Academy  
of Ave Maria — Sr. Mary Margaret,  
third grade
- Golden Terrace Elementary School  
— Suzie Alden, first grade
- Lake Park Elementary School  
— Christine Bezjak, first grade
- Lely Elementary School  
— Megan Noe, second grade
- Royal Palm Academy  
— Jennifer Clarke, first grade

The teachers devised creative projects to inspire the students. For instance, one classroom made an “act of kindness chain” to hang from the ceiling with each link representing an act of kindness. When the

group compiled their acts of kindness into a bound record book.

The teachers also got the parents involved by sending materials home (in both English and Spanish) describing the Giver’s Act of Kindness Challenge with the student’s homework. They encouraged parents to report their child’s acts of kindness along with other positive behavioral changes. Parents reported children doing chores such as taking out the trash and sweeping the floor without being asked. One parent told the story of her first-grade child asking, “Mommy, what ‘kind’ can I do for you today?”

Our young people’s personal dedication, courage and self-belief grow in direct proportion to their clarity about what they stand for and what they can accomplish.

If you are inspired to join our young people as they brighten our world, consider some

of these easy ideas for practicing acts of kindness:

{ 1 } Say “I love you” to those who mean the most to you.

{ 2 } Each day, tell at least one person something you admire or appreciate about him or her.

{ 3 } Choose being kind over being right.

{ 4 } Resist the urge to criticize.

{ 5 } When someone says something kind to you, pass the kindness on to someone else.



{ 6 } If you receive an unexpected smile, put a smile on your face as a gift to the next person you see.

We salute these young people who are using our Be-The-Change-Challenge as a springboard for the thoughts, words and actions that will define their lives. ☘

*Kathy A. Feinstein, L.M.H.C.,  
serves on the steering committee  
for the Be-The-Change-Challenge.*



Are you ready to take your place as an agent of change? Go to **be-the-change-challenge.com**, and commit to a daily act of kindness for 30 days.

chain reaches the floor, the class will celebrate with a “kindness party.” Two other classrooms tracked acts of kindness with student journals or used colorful graphs, while another