

This is not a Pollyanna theory. Each of us has personal trials in our lives, and no one is asking that we put on fake smiley faces and glad-hand everyone insincerely. The changes we make in this world come from deep within ourselves, when we choose to extend ourselves beyond what has happened in our lives to make others' lives better.

An example would be how we expect service professionals to behave. If a doctor or fireman were having a personal crisis, whether we were aware of it or not, would we want our illness or fire emergency to be glossed over because the professional is having a bad day? Oh, we are quick to know what we demand of others, yet we sometimes forget to expect the same from ourselves as we go out into the world and interact with friends, clients, and even those we encounter briefly during the day.

Obviously this is not a new theory; call it the Golden Rule or whatever you know it as, but the message and ensuing behavior is true and extremely powerful: treat others as you would like to be treated. Going further, let us recognize the good in all we meet. Recognizing the good people do, and acknowledging it reinforces the positive, and helps others do even more.

In summer of 2001, I began passing out magnets that said, simply, "Each of Us Makes a Difference. Thank You." I gave them to anyone I suspected was underappreciated (wouldn't that be mostly everyone?) When stopped in construction traffic, I gave a handful of magnets to a worker to share with his crew. When going through a drive-through, I would give my "thank you note" to the teller or the fast food cashier. I've given them to lab technicians, doctors and nurses, sanitation workers, office co-workers, teachers, principals, students, waitresses, bussers or anyone I encounter who could use a heartfelt dose of appreciation. Was this action usually a surprise to the recipient? Of course; but it was a pleasant surprise. My bank teller has all the incarnations of the magnets on the wall of her drive-through window.

Make a positive difference in someone's life today.