**Kind Gestures**

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Entered on July 25, 2005

My first and last stab at political office took place in the seventh grade: I ran for Student Council Vice President. Even to this day, I am still confounded as to what motivated me to become involved in public service. Throughout my early years of school, I was the timid girl with few friends who didn’t want to step on anyone’s toes. Nevertheless, I threw my hat into the ring. I cringe recalling how the yellow and black colors of the happy faces, emblazoned with the names of my running mate and me, blurred as I labored over them, rather than study for my algebra test. But all my efforts were in vain. I lost that campaign. I didn’t have the hundreds of glittering blue pencils with my name imprinted on them as my opponent had. Middle school politics is a nasty business.

But I did take the defeat quite hard. Determined to run again in high school and emerge victorious, I had to find a strategy. Realizing that my parents would never fund my campaign the exorbitant amount of money necessary to win over materialistic adolescents, I concluded that I could obtain their vote through kindness alone. In my utilitarian mindset, I figured everyone would vote for me because I was a “nice” person.

And so, with this scheme prominent in my mind, I entered high school. I introduced myself to every person within arm’s length, sticking out my hand with a smile that must have revealed all of my teeth. I greeted everyone I met by name around school, no matter what their social status, inquiring how life, or rather high school, was treating them. I struggled to remember all the trivial details about someone’s sick dog or another’s amazing winter vacation in Vermont so that I could bring up these points in future conversations.

By the beginning of my sophomore year, it is safe to say that I knew approximately one fourth of my class of over five hundred. After a year of being cordial to my classmates I began to reap the fruits of my labor.

People now began to shout my name as they saw me in the hallways and tell me about their secret crushes, feeling that I made a preferred confidante.

While my plan seemed to be unfolding nicely did I realize that my motives had changed. No words can adequately describe the feeling I receive when a fellow pupil smiles and is genuinely happy to see me. It is the type of warm feeling that generates in the heart and commences to move upward until it emerges into a smile. No longer am I the narcissistic girl whose seemingly endless benevolence is guided by ulterior motives. I truly do care about the people in my school and I no longer have to put forth effort to be kind. Now, I have no desire to run for Student Council. I’m simply not interested, maybe I never was.

Don’t get me wrong, I haven’t uncovered all the mysteries of life in my sixteen years, but one thing I do know for certain is that kindness will only come back to you tenfold.