

My Lesson in Re-Distributing Happiness from the Postcard Man

 Superintendent
CONNECT
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Dear Chehalis Families and Staff,

A few weeks ago, I received a letter from a man named Lowell Joerg who lives in Stockton, California. He is 95 years old and has a hobby he calls "Re-distribution of Happiness". In his letter he enclosed a postcard with a photo (circa 1930) of West Side School, Chehalis, Washington. Lowell's mission is to spread happiness by returning postcards he finds to where they came from.

His re-distribution of happiness hobby was a great reminder of how one simple act of kindness can positively affect another person. As I told the story of receiving this letter from the "Postcard Man" I saw smiles spread across people's faces. Lowell's actions not only made me smile but others around as well. He truly did re-distribute happiness.

His actions remind me that each one of us has the power inside of us to "re-distribute happiness". These actions don't have to be big, cost us a lot of money or even take a lot of time. It may have only taken Lowell a few minutes to look up the mailing address for the Chehalis School District and put a stamp on an envelope but the gesture will live in my heart for a long time.

When I am visiting classrooms and a student opens a door and greets me with a smile, that small gesture makes a huge difference. When I enter a school office and am greeted with a cheerful hello, or when I see a teacher take the time to truly listen to a student, these simple acts mean a lot and can impact our community far beyond that one moment.

You never know when one simple kind word or gesture could completely turn someone's day around or impact their life in a profound way. Listening to W.F. West guest speaker Kevin Hines last week, I was struck by the simple words he wished he had heard from his friends and loved ones before he tried to harm himself - "Are you OK?" "Do you need help?" and "Can I help you?" Such simple words but such a potentially profound impact.

As we near the end of the school year with all of the events, activities, final exams, and a myriad of other things that must be done before the last day, I challenge myself and I challenge each of you to take a moment to "re-distribute happiness" just like Lowell has done. Take a moment to add some goodness to the world around you. Give someone a compliment. Hold open a door. Thank someone for the work they do. Or, check in with your loved ones and ask them if they're OK. Through these small things, we can lift each other up and make someone's day brighter. We all have lots of responsibilities and things we have to get done but our tasks become much lighter and easier to achieve with a happy heart.

I have responded to Lowell with some personal money for him to continue his mission to re-distribute happiness and provided him with another postcard I found in an antique store here in Lewis County.

Attitude is contagious and Lowell Joerg's is worth catching. Is yours?

West Side School, Chehalis, Wash.



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