

# THE COAST NEWS

## Local participants join global chorus for kindness

By [Wehtahnah Tucker](#)

Aug 18, 2011 • 2 views • [0 comments](#)

ENCINITAS — In a time when riots and bombings, snide remarks by politicians and a gloomy economic outlook dominate the media, random acts of kindness are occurring almost unnoticed. But that's part of the charm of the fourth annual Great Kindness Challenge.

Hundreds of San Diego County children participated in the global daylong event on Aug. 13. Presented by Kids for Peace, a Carlsbad-based nonprofit, this was one day where kids around the world do kind acts.

"It's just about being nice when you don't even have to," said Ryan Moore, 9.

Children were encouraged to choose from a 50-item checklist of suggestions such as complimenting five people, bringing treats to firefighters, picking up trash, and making sack lunches for the homeless. Many of the activities were general enough to be applicable across continents and cultures.

Locally, the Great Kindness Challenge prep party was held a day in advance to give children the opportunity to bake cookies, make posters, decorate hearts to leave on cars, write notes for librarians, make postcards for elected officials and military families and paint peace rocks that could be left in private or public spaces.

On the day of the event, children gathered at Cottonwood Creek Park to complete many of the challenges together. Some children pushed a friend on a swing and helped spruce up the park by removing long lost tennis balls and soda cans from the creek.

The large group then displayed their signs to passersby along Encinitas Boulevard and received many friendly waves and honks in return.

Children of all ages and their parents were excited to participate in such a worthwhile event.

"What I like most about the Great Kindness Challenge is that it brings smiles to people's faces," said board member Shannon McAfee. "It also sets a good example for my son," she said as she lifted 18-month-old Paxton from his stroller to help hold a heart-shaped sign.

From the park children paraded to the downtown fire station to surprise firefighters and paramedics with home baked cookies. "Thank you for keeping us safe," they said in unison.

Moonlight Beach was the next stop. Despite the overcast weather, the happy caravan managed to brighten the day of many beachgoers and lifeguards as they presented them with water and a big "thank you."

Beginning as a local event, the Great Kindness Challenge has grown exponentially. Last year's Challenge reached 50 countries, spanning six continents. This year, the group aimed even higher, hoping for one million youth participants in 100 countries.

GenerationOn, the youth division of Points of Light Institute, recently joined as a major sponsor to the event; the group brings together multiple youth service organizations and programs, including Children for Children, The League, Learning to Give, Points of Light Institute's Kids Care Clubs, HandsOn Schools, and HandsOn Network's youth-driven programs.

"This is a wonderful and important step toward our goal of inspiring children to spread peace and love around the globe," said Jill McManigal, executive director and co-founder of Kids for Peace. "We believe that simple acts of kindness will lead to world peace."

Some of the participants were intimately familiar with the benefits of kindness. Jessica Laursen was joined by her daughter Zoe, 11. Their family recently relocated from New Orleans and recalled the insufferable conditions they've endured in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

“We’ve been on the receiving end of so much kindness,” Laursen said. “Like the people who gave us money when our bank was closed and we couldn’t access our accounts or the people who gave us a free oil change.” Laursen said she was grateful to be able to return some of the kindness shown to her family. “I think peace starts with just one smile,” she said.

After a long day of doing nice deeds, a large group of the group’s membership and supporters gathered for a beach bonfire to celebrate the good they’d achieved.

The mission of Kids for Peace is to cultivate every child’s innate ability to foster peace through cross-cultural experiences and hands-on arts, service and environmental projects. There are over 100 registered chapters around the globe. To learn how to get involved, visit

[kidsforpeaceglobal.org](http://kidsforpeaceglobal.org) or  
[greatkindnesschallenge.org](http://greatkindnesschallenge.org).



Related posts:

1. [Cancer patient gets TLC from local entrepreneurs](#)
2. [Youngsters work to understand global water crisis](#)
3. [Children’s global art exchange on display](#)
4. [PENNIES FOR PEACE](#)
5. [Group rallies to raise global warming awareness](#)

Filed Under: [News](#) • [Rancho Santa Fe News](#) • [The Coast News](#)

Tags: [Encinitas](#)

 **Comments (0)**

[Trackback URL](#)



**one-to-one classes**  
are not *just* for tutoring.

[learn more](#)

**fusion**  
academy & learning center