

It's Cool to be Kind

By Priscilla Maxwell



1. Kindness Prototype Mark 1.
2. Creating kindness is a serious business requiring concentration.
3. Fundraising for India was just one of the Youth for Kindness projects in 2007.

Karuna Hospice Service's desire to encourage a kindness culture in the community was supported by the Queensland Performing Arts Centre's 2008 "Out of the Box Festival" in Brisbane for children between the ages of three and eight. A series of art workshops under the banner "It's Cool to be Kind" was held in the foyer of the Lyric Theatre over the six-day festival in June.

In a total of twenty workshops working with 300 children (and their parents), through storytelling, interactive games and artwork the children explored ways of how to be kind to each other. The parents participated in the workshops, and this created an opportunity for kindness conversations between parent and child, and between all the parents and children.

This was great fun, and was captured in photos and comments from the children along with their artwork. The completed artwork was scanned into the computer with the children's help, and uploaded at the end of each day to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's venue in Sydney, where he was giving his teachings. The artwork and posters along with the comments were displayed for His Holiness and others to view.

And here are just some of the children's comments:

"Kindness is light blue, because you can get to swim in the ocean and see all the beautiful animals" ... "Lollies make me happy, and I share them" ... "The first-aid kit is a kind thing" ... "Help them plant a garden" ... "My friend was really nice to me when some girls were being mean, she told them to go away" ... "Ask someone to play if they look lonely."

This was the second year Karuna Hospice Service has undertaken the Youth for Kindness project timed with His Holiness' visits to Australia.

In 2007 the focus was on children in both primary and secondary schools, and the activities the schools could choose from covered international kindness (a chat room with students in Baghdad, fundraising for India, mandalas for schools in the Solu Khumbu area of Nepal); community kindness (supporting local refugees, food for the disadvantaged, kindness to the elderly); creative kindness (decorating trees with peace flags); and kindness at school (random acts of kindness, baking kindness cookies). ●

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