

# Sagemont Students Accept Great Kindness Challenge

BY STACEY BOMSER

It's not uncommon to see older students walking younger ones to class or children holding doors for their teachers at the Sagemont Lower School Campus. These simple acts of kindness are part of the school culture. During the week of January 25th-29th, the entire school will commit to completing 15,000 acts of kindness as students, teachers, and administrators accept the Great Kindness Challenge.

The Sagemont School was one of 4,128 schools to take part in the program last year, which inspired 109,344,450 acts of kindness around the world. More than 150 million acts of kindness are expected to take place worldwide this year through the Great Kindness Challenge. It is a proactive and positive bullying prevention initiative that improves school climate and increases student engagement.

Maritza Zea, Guidance Counselor of the Sagemont Lower School Campus, says The Sagemont School supports the Great Kindness Challenge as it strives to create a bully-free, safe and caring school environment. "The Great Kindness Challenge helps fulfill Sagemont's mission statement of creating a school culture of acceptance, tolerance and respect. Sagemont takes pride in embracing the diversity of the student body and in offering a safe, supportive learning environment to each and every one of our students."

Ms. Zea says Sagemont's overall goal is to spread kindness school-wide, which will create healthy relationships between students, between students and teachers, and between students and parents. "Positive relationships allow students to ease anxiety, bring a sense of belonging to the school, and to focus and engage in learning. Researchers have found that students who performed acts of kindness with their peers, families, and in the community had greater academic success than those who simply recorded seeing acts of kindness."

Every student, teacher and staff member at Sagemont will take part in the Great Kindness Challenge, pledging to perform ten acts of kindness every day for one week, for a total of 15,000 acts of kindness.

To kick-off the week, Sagemont has invited Weston police from the Broward Sheriff's Office to help greet students in the morning carpool lane, along with Student Council and National Elementary Honor Society members.

To help students achieve the goal of performing 50 acts of kindness, each grade will engage in a different activity. Early Childhood Education students will color pictures for the front office staff, maintenance workers, and bus drivers. Kindergarten students will create posters about kindness which they will share with students at Chesterbrook Academy. First graders will make cards of well-wishes for patients at the Nicklaus Children's Hospital, while second graders will make cards for Joe DiMaggio Children's Hospital. Third grade students will write letters to Broward County Parks and Recreation maintenance crews. Students in fourth grade will draw pictures with words of encouragement for residents in a local nursing home. Fifth grade students will make new friends by adopting a "Kindness Pen Pal" at one of Sagemont's sister schools, The Honor Roll School in Houston, Texas. According to Ms. Zea, "Students will tell a little about themselves and write kind words of encouragement to show it is important to care about others, even if they are hundreds of miles away."

To help students fulfill their goal of committing 10 acts of kindness each day, children will be able to participate in Kindness Stations during recess. Last year, activities included making a kindness heart-shaped hand tree and making kindness cards for cafeteria workers, bus drivers and office staff. Students also shared kindness quotes on sentences strips which were displayed in the cafeteria.

Ms. Zea says the hope is that Sagemont students will continue performing acts and words of kindness not just during this particular week, but the whole year. "Sagemont teachers and administrators believe that teaching children about kindness will make them gain social awareness of themselves, being more responsive and caring about others. When practicing kind act after kind act, students make kindness a habit. As kindness becomes a habit, this can effect real change in their learning environment. The 'living kindness' conditions will enhance the students' understanding and their ability to think critically about ways to generate more kindness on an individual and global level."

**The Great Kindness Challenge was created by Kids for Peace to provide schools a tool for creating a positive school environment. For more information go to [www.greatkindnesschallenge.org](http://www.greatkindnesschallenge.org).**

