

dealing in kindness

Small acts of kindness are making big ripples across the country.

By Liz Graham

Over the past year, a revolution of sorts has been spreading through Sydney and the rest of Australia. Thousands of people have been involved in random acts of kindness: giving a homeless person some warm socks, paying the petrol bill for the person in line behind them or even a gesture as simple as leaving a two-dollar coin in a supermarket trolley for the next person to find. What connects these acts is the “Kindness Card” that gets left behind with the gift, a kind of calling card that asks the recipient to pass a kind deed on to someone else. These cards are the brainchild of Jonathon Fisher, founder of social organisation Wake Up Sydney (WUS).

“I truly believe that ‘small’ is revolutionary and we do ourselves a great disservice thinking that change only takes place through ‘big’ actions. Whether we are giving or receiving kindness we experience a profound sense of connection and renewal,” says Fisher, who launched the Kindness Card project as part of WUS in April 2009. Fisher quit his corporate job in 2005, and then worked as a male nanny for a few years, where he said he immersed himself in the “luxuries of nature, swimming, art, friends, yoga and meditation” and got motivated to create a new business centred around kindness and consciousness.

The inspiration for the Kindness Cards came from the film *Pay It Forward*, which centres around the ripple effect of people’s acts of kindness. The project runs like this: anyone living in Australia can request a card pack through the WUS website and Fisher sends out cards to them for free. People can then use the cards however they want. A year since the Kindness Card project began, Fisher has sent out 15,000 packs of cards (which are all decorated with local artwork and printed on recycled paper), with word spreading past Sydney to all corners of Australia. “Now my tiny apartment is full of boxes of Kindness Cards, postage stamps and envelopes!” Fisher laughs. The cost of printing and distributing the cards is paid for with the proceeds from a handful of social events (which include speakers and live music performances) Fisher holds in Sydney throughout the year. These sell out fast, a good indication

of how much support there is for the project. Fisher, who practises yoga at the The Iyengar Yoga Institute of Bondi Junction, says that the yoga community is “at the heart” of WUS. He’s humbled by the support of various yoga schools and affiliated companies, but also by all the acts of kindness he’s seen as a result. “I feel really privileged to witness the best of human nature,” he says.

To request Kindness Cards or to find out about events and other projects that Wake Up Sydney runs, visit www.wakeupsydney.com.au



Kindness Cards founder
Jonathon Fisher.