

This year I resolve—to visit nursing homes, pick up trash in a park, lead a 4-H club, maybe even take part in community government or my neighborhood association. Good for you. Please do all of them.

While all of these are vital and important roles,

how about taking those resolutions a step further. Resolve to care for all youth in the community by being a role model and mentor. Being a parent is not a criteria. Grandparents, uncles, aunts, next-door neighbors, teachers, youth group leaders, retirees, single college students—in other

words—everyone can make a difference.

Think back to your favorite memories of people, places, events, traditions and moments of caring. They probably don't include time spent in front of a computer or TV. The best memories invariably include interactions with people you loved, admired or looked to for support.

In his book, *7 Things Kids Never Forget*, Don Rose offers some hints on how we might reach out to youth in significant ways during the coming year. Here is his list of seven things kids never forget.

**1. Kids never forget people who care.**

Do you remember the special times when a parent or teacher helped you with a science project, when a favorite aunt took you to a concert; when you built a dog house with your adopted "grandfather" from next door; or perhaps when you worked with others on a community service project. These are all instances of people reaching out and caring.

**2. Kids never forget the stories they hear.**

An aunt's or uncle's tale of growing up, or even a story told around a camp fire with a 4-H or Boy Scout leader can bring back good memories and chuckles. Stories read to children in daycare centers or at school can be extra special because of the person doing the reading. Encourage kids to tell you their favorite story.

**3. Kids never forget failure.**

Every broken promise, every "I told-you-so," and every personal failure has an upside down pain. Helping children learn how to fail and to learn from failure is best accomplished with few words and without questions. Instead of criticism, use your heart, ears and eyes and even a hug. Plan a "we messed up" celebration where everybody shares one "messed up" memory. Serve a "messed up" cake!

**4. Kids never forget crisis time.**

Kids need parents and other caring adults to coach them through crisis situations. They do not need to be rescued. Listen while they discuss possible solutions and encourage them as they make good decisions and take action.

**5. Kids never forget rules.**

Kids may stretch, bend or twist the rules while learning about growing up, but the most valuable time as a caring adult is spent doing three things: teaching the rules, enforcing them and modeling expected behavior.

**6. Kids never forget the milestones of growing up.**

With each milestone, kids get closer to adulthood and life gets more complex. Celebrate those milestones along the way. Celebrate the first day of....., the first overnight away from home, the first lost tooth, birthdays, special religious traditions, etc. Make your own "good news" headlines to

celebrate accomplishments. Keep snapshots, make scrapbooks, write notes and keep journals as a way of remembering important events, then share them with kids.

**7. Kids never forget the traditions of home.**

Celebrating special times like birthdays, holidays, and vacations all have symbolic content. If children you know don't typically have special opportunities, invite their families to join yours, ask other children to share vacations with you. Recognize things in each family that are special and unique for their family. These traditions are the glue that holds families together from generation to generation and extended family can help keep those traditions alive in families experiencing distress.

Remind all kids that you appreciate them, praise them when they do things well, recognize the good things they do. Have you ever written a note to youth featured in a newspaper article congratulating them on a job well-done? Volunteer to read to children in school, at daycares, in after-school programs. Become a mentor for Teammates or a leader for a 4-H club or other youth organization, learn about Character Counts! and help at camps and other activities. Support kids by attending their plays, dance recitals, concerts, sports events. Talk to them, listen to them, be their friend.

Always behave as if you are being watched by a young person. You are. At the end of a lengthy discussion on how adults could best help youth avoid risky behaviors, Dr. Carol Cassell, director of the Teen Pregnancy Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said that her best answer to that question was easily summed up in one word, "love." Show kids, all kids, that you love them and value them.

This year I resolve—to be a great role model, to be involved in my community, to mentor a child in my neighborhood. Remember actions speak louder than words. When you remember others, you will be remembered and your community will be enriched.  
Happy New Year!

# This year I resolve...

## New Year Resolutions



LaDeane Jha  
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### In this issue...

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-  Horticulture —page 2
-  Environmental Focus —page 3
-  Farm Views —page 4
-  Acreage Insights —page 5
-  Food & Fitness —page 6
-  Family Living —page 7
-  4-H & Youth —pages 8-9
-  Community Focus —page 10



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