

Write your child a letter tomorrow

You might not know it, but a wonderful event takes place yearly, on the third Thursday of March, which is tomorrow. It's called, "Absolutely Incredible Kid Day."

Don't be misled by the title. It isn't like Mother's Day or Father's Day, but is an annual "call to action, asking adults to write letters of love, appreciation and encouragement to the children in their lives, be it their own children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, neighbors or friends."

I can think of no more noble deed than that of lifting a child's spirit, and I hope this column will encourage adults everywhere to get involved.

How long has it been since you told your children or grandchildren how special they are? How long since you pointed out something positive, instead of nagging them about the negative?

How long since you said the words, "I love you," or "I'm proud of you"? What better time than now? And what bet-



Dayle Shockley

ter tool than a personal letter?

According to the guidelines set forth by Camp Fire USA, your letter need not be lengthy, but can be a simple note in a lunchbox, or a card in a backpack. Anything that sends a reinforcing, positive message to the child is sure to bring a smile.

Our lives are often spent in high gear. Finding the time to encourage our children can be difficult. In addition, the words we speak may stay with them only a brief time before being forgotten. A letter is something they can hold in their hands and read over and over again, even years later.

Jim Fay, Ph.D., co-author of "Parenting with Love and Logic" recalls the day when he discovered his "very old and tired baby book" in a box in the basement of his home. He was 63 and it was the first time he had laid eyes on it. He didn't even know he had a baby book.

When Fay opened it up, a small folded letter tumbled out. Even though the paper was "brittle and yellowed by the ravages of time," he says it was "the most beautiful thing" he had ever seen. Ironically, it was the only letter he ever received from his parents.

"They were very good, very kind people," Fay says of his parents. "They just didn't know how incredibly important and rewarding it is for a kid to receive a letter."

The folks at Camp Fire USA hope you won't limit your letter-writing to just the children in your life, but will look around you and find other children who have touched your life.

If your organization or company would like to be involved in this event, or if just one person wants to help out, visit http://www.campfireusa.org/aikd_get_involved.aspx for more information.

If you aren't quick with words or ideas, here are some guidelines that might help:

- Form a mental picture of the child and the things you enjoy or appreciate about him or her.

- Make a list of adjectives that describe the child: funny, honest, smart, skillful, helpful, caring, etc.

- Remember special times you have shared with the child. Refer to them in your letter.

- Be specific and descriptive. Try, "I like it when you ..." Humor is good, too.

You have a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in a child's life on Thursday. I hope you will seize the moment.

Dayle Shockley is a former Southeast Texan who now lives in Houston.

Thanks noted

■ Thank you to everyone who made the Spindletop Center's March 3 autism fundraiser a great success. Our donors and attendees did a wonderful thing by raising both money and awareness for programs to help children with this puzzling range of disorders.

We would also like to thank the Spindletop Foundation Board and Advisory Committee, who made the entire event possible, and the fantastic staff at Bistro LeMonde, who made the event so enjoyable. Special thanks go to Monty and Sid Picard of Gulf Coast Electric for placing the winning bid on a very special piece of artwork that was created that evening.

Autism will affect one out every 110 children born each year, and it will affect one out of 70 boys. The Spindletop Center (formerly Spindletop Mental Health,

Mental Retardation) is committed to working to provide much-needed help to those affected by autism.

For more information on autism programming at Spindletop, call (409) 784-5540.

Sally Walden, director of network services, Spindletop Center, Beaumont

■ About a week ago I lost my driver's license, at the gym, I thought, but it was never turned in. This past Friday there was a knock on my front door at about 9:30 p.m. I was hesitant to answer it, but I did. Standing there was a pretty lady swinging a driver's license and asking, "Is this yours? I found it in the H-E-B parking lot."

I was amazed. I said yes ma'am, it surely is mine. I thanked her repeatedly. It's nice to know there are still such kind people around. God bless.

Albert Prosser, Beaumont