

Random acts of kindness. They're wonderful to receive. And to give.

Sometimes, random acts of kindness can be taught. Or at least people can be taught to notice them when they happen. Just ask Maria Georgo, the Director of Student Life at Beacon College in Leesburg.

"We had a promotion for students so they could notice the good things and recognize them," said Maria. "If they observed someone being kind, they could write it up and we had a drawing for the names mentioned."

Maria said students are like hawks when it comes to seeing students doing the bad things. Not that good things – random acts of kindness type of things – don't happen at Beacon College.

Quite the opposite.

"It happens all the time," Maria said. "Somebody sees a student upset or crying and will go and check on them to see if they're OK. Or they will call on one of us and tell us they're worried about someone."

"Our students all have learning disabilities. They're all faced with their own incredible challenges," said Maria. "So when they take time to help someone, it's special."

She mentioned several acts, like the student wearing a knee brace who had someone offer to get their tray for

lunch. Or the student who started a homework help club to help students having difficulty.

She talked about a student who listened – really listened – to an elderly woman when they helped clean up her mobile home after the 2007 tornadoes. "I wanted to cry," Maria said. "I complimented him because he was listening to her and repeating back what she said. She knew he was really listening. To me it was one of the most kind things."

"The big stuff people usually notice. It's the little stuff that makes the people feel they absolutely belong."

The goal of the random acts of kindness program, which began two years ago, is to shift the focus to help students feel appreciated and to take the time to appreciate someone else."

"Sometimes they happen so quickly or are so subtle we forget them," Georgo said. "So we want students to notice them." ■



“The big stuff, people usually notice. It's the little stuff that makes the people feel they absolutely belong.”



Maria Georgo, center, runs a program at Beacon College that encourages students to recognize others doing good deeds. Pictured with her are Alexander Blankenship, James Lanham, Jamar Butler and Raymond Ramos.