

## Author takes 'Golden Rule' to extra step

**By Kristen Browning-Blas**  
**Denver Post Staff Writer**

**Feb. 18, 2003** - "So in all things, do unto others what you would have them do unto you ..."

- Matthew 7:12  
laine Parke has a simple idea for the salvation of humanity and an answer to that most basic question, "What's the point?" Follow the golden rule.

If that idea sounds too old-fashioned, compare it to the similar premise of the film "Pay It Forward."

The lead character in this hit movie suggests a simple way to change the world - do three good deeds and ask only that the recipients repay your favor by doing three more.

The author of "Join the Golden Rule Revolution" (Caring Media International, \$19.95) admits that hers is not a new idea; in fact, every religion preaches some version of the golden rule. It's older than the Bible. But Parke's approach is as modern as a V-chip.

She wants us to start treating other people better and offers a road map how to accomplish that. In her book, she suggests one caring behavior to work on each month and provides suggestions of things that fall into that category.

January is "Lend a Hand" month, for example, during which time she suggests writing a thank-you letter to a person who helped you and giving a stranger a ticket to a sports event or concert.

"It takes about a month to learn a new behavior," she says, so after 31 days of reaching out to others, her pupils should be ready to move on to "You Count," the theme for February. This month they will celebrate self-esteem and the importance of others in their lives through daily meditations, such as "Today I'll find value in each thing I do."

"This book is about forging random acts of kindness into caring habits," she writes, borrowing ideas from best sellers "Simple Abundance" and the "Chicken Soup for the Soul" series, but taking them a step further.

"It goes beyond the "Oh, isn't that nice" reaction to a 30-day blitz," she says.

Parke field-tested her plan in Somerset, Pa., between 1990 and 1993 with radio spots, fliers, posters and programs in the schools, grocery stores, banks and churches with the message of the month. Afterward, an Indiana University of Pennsylvania study found 72 percent of people reported they felt a more caring community around them.

### **Her personal path**

With a background in marketing and a lifelong avocation for working with children, Parke began to dovetail the two aspects of her life into her current mission. In the late 1980s, she was vice president of marketing for a salon products firm. She also volunteered with children. "I had this experience with a girl who couldn't read," Parke says. "She was fixated on needing love and affection, and one day her dad came stumbling, drunk, into the classroom. I said to myself, "Why am I writing a market plan for hair spray?"- " So began the book. She knew she didn't want to write "just another book on how to be happy" and for seven years kept files of ideas and quotes from "Popeye to LL Cool J to Confucius."

She finally decided to put it all in an inspirational book for teachers, and from there grew "Join the Golden Rule Revolution."

She admits the calling to write this book "felt like a burden at times" but says every step leading up to it took her in the right direction. "As I look back, the path was very purposeful," she muses. "I was building my skills in the media and acting on a desire to help children."

### **More than self-help**

Although she claims no interest in being a guru, she offers advice based on her own search for a mission. "Do not search for the answers - you will find you have lived the answers," she says. "If you're seeking a purpose and can't find it, ask yourself 'Where am I not being myself?' The more you can be yourself the easier it is to know why you're here."

She doesn't consider this a self-help book, rather a guide to bettering society and oneself in the process. This simple idea goes beyond "people-pleasing," doing for others so they will like you, to doing for others so we'll have a more civil society. A 30-year study of Harvard graduates cited in "The Art of Happiness," by the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, M.D. (Riverhead Books, 1998), found that an altruistic lifestyle contributed to good mental health, more energy and calmness.

### **Religious reaction**

"What's common to all religions is a call to be our best selves. The call itself is common to all religions," Parke says.

Her highest hope is that March will become international "Resolve Conflict Month" as whole countries adopt her program. "You see these things that try to bring us together, like Hands Across America and We Are the World, but they come and go, this is meant to stick," she says.