Spreading Aloha

My grandmother once told me, "T.J., You should be thankful for your parents and how hard they work. You should be thankful you have food on the table and a roof over your head." I hadn't thought much about what I had in my life, and I realized that I shouldn't take for granted the many things we have been blessed with. Not all people are so fortunate to have a house, a car, or even enough to eat. As I thought about what she shared, I asked her for an example of when she met someone in need. She told me a story of how kindness towards others who do not have much can go a long way. Acts of kindness can be rewarding for the receiver but also much more rewarding for the giver. The acts of kindness I'd like to talk about are buying another person groceries, listening to your parents and understanding they don’t always have a lot of money but they give a little extra when they can, and how Saint Damien helped the Molokai people. I know I am grateful for everything I have now and I feel good when I reciprocate the deed for others too.

First, my grandmother shared a story with me one day. Beep! Beep! Beep! “Ma'am do you want to try your card again?” Beep! Beep! Beep! “Miss your card has been declined. Would you like to try another card?” A little boy and a little girl tugged on their mother’s shirt. The kids said, “I’m hungry mom, can we go home now?” The mother answered, “Hang on, let me pay for the groceries first.” As she looked in her wallet for another card, the kids started to lose their patience and whine. “Excuse me,” said my grandmother from behind the children. “I’d like to pay for this woman’s groceries please.” The lady whose card declined looked at my grandmother and told her, “No need, it’s ok.” My grandmother looked at her and said, “I’ve been there too, and it would be my pleasure to help.” The cashier took my grandma’s money, paid the bill, smiled at her and the mom, and said, “All done, you’re good.”
After that, the mother looked at my grandma and said, “Thank you so much. I don’t know what I would’ve fed them tonight.” My grandmother was buying another person groceries, which was a very selfless act of kindness.

There are many people in our community who work hard but struggle to make ends meet. Many people are on a strict budget and have to make difficult financial decisions to pay their rent or to buy food for their families. This is why you should be listening to your parents and understanding that they don’t always have a lot of money but they give a little extra when they can. Have you ever been in a situation where you needed or wanted to buy something but didn’t have the money? Have you ever asked your parents for money and they said no because they have bills to pay? This poor mother must have felt so sad and embarrassed in this situation where she could not afford to buy her children food, but after my grandmother helped her, I’m sure she was very happy and grateful.

Undoubtedly, one of the most inspiring stories of kindness took place in Hawaii on the Kalaupapa Peninsula on the island of Molokai, when Saint Damien helped the Molokai people. In 1873, Father Damien de Veuster and three other chaplains signed up to care for people experiencing leprosy on that peninsula. As time went on, Father Damien decided he would remain permanently to care for the people of Kalaupapa. He was truly dedicated to caring for the spiritual and physical needs of the people there. Father Damien’s kindness also went above and beyond in the community by inspiring leaders to build houses, roads, schools and churches. The people were so poor in money, yet so rich in spirit because of the kindness of Father Damien. On April 15th, 1889, after 16 years of service, Father Damien passed away of leprosy himself. His story has been retold around the world, an inspiration of how love and charity can make a
difference to those in need. His act of kindness was to serve the community, knowing that death from leprosy would be inevitable.

Acts of kindness can come in many forms. There was the grandmother who provided for a family who did not have enough to eat so she was buying another person groceries, because she once experienced the same hardship in her life. Then, there was the single mother who gave a little something special to her children, knowing she was on a strict budget. That mother probably ended up sacrificing her own wants in order to share with her children, and her children showed kindness in return by respecting their mother and being thankful for what they were able to receive. This is an example as to why you as a child should be listening to your parents and understanding they don’t always have a lot of money, but that they give a little extra when they can. Finally, there was the ultimate kindness, one that came from deep within. Saint Damien was that prime example by how he displayed selfless generosity which made an impact in the lives of so many patients who were suffering. Kindness comes in many forms so there is no excuse as to why people cannot perform one act of kindness. As we show a little kindness and goodwill, the world will simply become a better place. One does not need money to be rich, but it is more important to be rich with love.