

Happy holidays: Nice guys die last

December 4, 2010

In this season where everyone seems to behave just a little bit nicer, it's good news to learn that being nice pays off in the end. According to research being done at the University of California-Berkley, being nice results in greater longevity. This has been confirmed by another study at SUNY-Stony Brook which observed that "Survival of the Kindest" is not just theory. As reported by author Gail Sheehy, "It is becoming a revolutionary cultural movement." Sheehy adds, "For so long we have repeated the careless aphorism 'Nice guys finish last' but here is my interpretation: 'Nice guys die last.'"

This view jibes with research being done at the University of Notre Dame about generosity. Simply, the facts are that people who are religious tend to give more and senior citizens who volunteer live longer.

Well, lucky for us that all this news comes during the holiday season when it just seems easier to be magnanimous. It turns out that being nice is not that difficult.

Take the "buy locally" movement currently gaining steam across the nation. In case you missed it, last Saturday was designated as a day (between Black Friday and Cyber Monday) when we were all asked to shop at local stores. This is a great idea, but it was under publicized. However, I did come across one aspect of this that really struck my fancy.

The concept is pretty basic. Every week between now and Christmas identify three locally owned businesses that you would not want the community to lose. Then pa-

tronize those businesses. (Obviously doing this 52 weeks a year would be even better.)

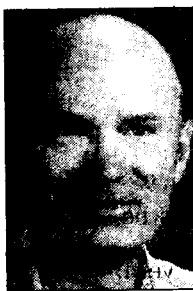
Not only is this a great concept, it's doing something nice for your community. Plus, given the fact that (according to Bloomberg Business Week and others), up to \$68 of every \$100 spent at a locally owned business recirculates into the local economy while the typical rate for a nationally owned business is around \$13, this just makes good business sense for Cadillac.

In terms of individual gifts, doing something nice does not need to cost an arm and a leg. For instance, you can give someone the gift of computer technology for next to nothing. Buy a flash drive (those little memory sticks that cost \$10 or less) and load it up with free software.

Put Open Office on the drive (www.openoffice.org). This is a full office suite comparable to Microsoft Office. (I write this column using Open Office. A simple checkbox in the settings is all it takes to save all documents in Word format.)

Put Microsoft Security Essentials on the drive (www.microsoft.com/security_essentials/). This is a free anti-virus program that was rated as one of the top ten products of 2010 by PC World Magazine. It's rock solid and doesn't cost a dime.

Put Malwarebytes Anti-Malware on the drive (www.malwarbytes.org). This will



Neff
Zone

Jim
Neff

find and kill nasties that even the best anti-virus programs miss. You just hit the update button, then hit the quick scan button, and let it do its thing. It only runs when you tell it to run and it's deadly accurate.

Put Picasa on the drive (<http://picasa.google.com>). This is a full photo editing program, just perfect for all those digital holiday pictures.

The person receiving this gift gets great software, a personal flash drive, and the knowledge that you put a lot of time and thought into the gift. It's really something nice. If you really want to impress them, offer to set up the software on their computer.

While you're shopping, it's also a good time to spread your niceness around. You can do this by being extra polite. My Grandma Bosley was a big believer in this. And there was always a reason for every nicety.

Hold doors open for other people. This covers men opening doors for ladies, holding doors for anyone older than you, and holding doors open for anyone with an armful of packages. Grandma Bosley: "You don't have a broken arm so it's the least you can do."

If you're a gentleman walking with a lady, always walk on the side closest to the street. Grandma Bosley: "If a car splashes water from a puddle you should get wet instead of the lady because

she's dressed better."

Take your hat off when you eat. Grandma Bosley: "What are you? A heathen?"

If a lady is standing and you (as a gentleman) are sitting, offer the lady your seat. Grandma Bosley: "So what if you're tired. Do you want me to smack you?"

Well, you get the idea. Just mind your manners. You'll live longer. If your grandmother was like mine, we both know that even though she's no longer (technically) alive, she's watching, just waiting for you to slip up. Do so at your own peril.

Finally, here's a tip for parents. If your kids are at home this holiday season they may be tempted to spend an inordinate amount of time on Facebook. You may want to keep tabs on what they're doing.

If this is the case, check out GoGoStat (www.gogostat.com). This is a free service that notifies you when your children post new status messages containing vulgarities, terms which could indicate cyber-bullying or other unsafe activity, new photos which could prove embarrassing, personal profile details which could compromise family security, or when they 'friend' new people through their account.

The best part about this is that it's free, there's nothing to download, and it operates inside of Facebook. You can even get a free iPhone app for this.

JIM NEFF is a local columnist. Comments to neffzone@gmail.com. Read Neff Zone columns online at www.neffzone.com/cadillacnews.