

Be kind, always

21 years ago, beloved GHHS senior Adam Provencal was shot and killed while trying to apologize for a Halloween prank. To honor him his sister, Lara, spends October filling 31 days with random acts of kindness

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When Oct. 1 hits the calendar, the Halloween season takes over as bags of candy fill the shelves, spooky decorations line yards and costume catalogues arrive in mailboxes. The leaves change, the cold weather rolls in, the smell of bonfires linger, and the warm months of summer fade into the beginning of fall.

But Lara Provencal Capuano and her family can't mask the pain that's triggered with this time of the year. The memories are as crisp as the autumn air as Capuano thinks back to the night that she could never forget-- the night her 17-year-old brother Adam Provencal was shot and killed.

21 years ago this month, her older sibling was killed by gunshot while apologizing for a Halloween toilet-papering prank.

"I kind of mark my life like a before and after because everything changed," Capuano, a 1999 GHHS grad who now lives in Rochester, New York said.

The seasonal signs stir feelings of sorrow for the family. Capuano shared that October in particular is a hard month for them to get through. When she decided it was time for her to fully process his death years later, she created a blog to help her cope.

Three years ago Capuano made the brave choice to turn her inward grief outward and focus on how she can benefit other peoples' lives. She managed to turn her 31 days of torture into 31 days of kindness.

Every day for the month of October, Capuano, her family, and thousands of her blog readers from around the world participate by doing an act of kindness.

"When I first started it, I really was doing it for my family," Capuano said. "It was really because I was trying to give a voice to what my family goes through and to reach out to other people who might be hurting or strangers who might need their day brightened up. Then it kind of went

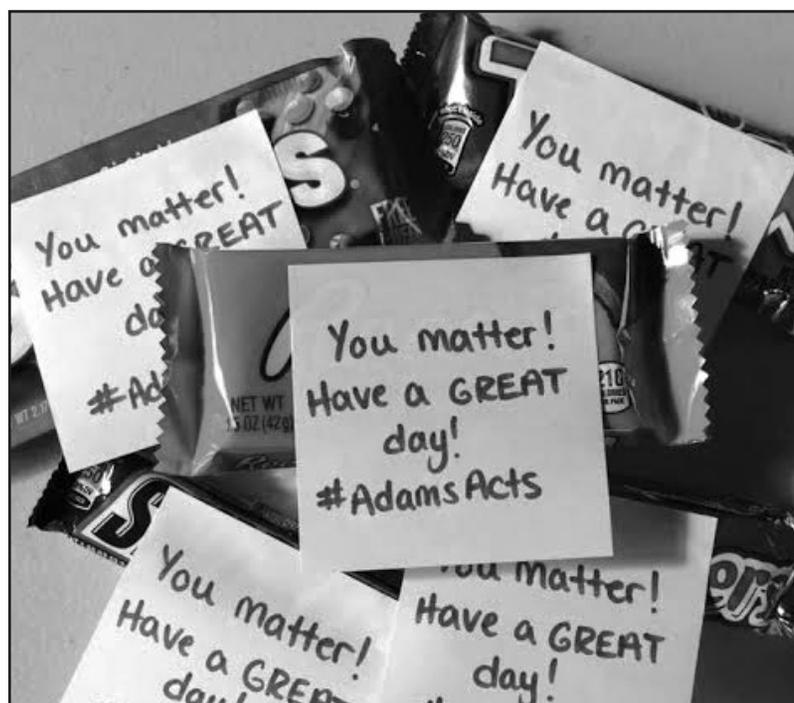


Photo courtesy of Lara Provencal Capuano

BE SWEET: Capuano often leaves affirmations for others. Her blog inspires followers from around the world to do the same and to participate in doing daily acts of kindness during October, continuing throughout the year.

viral and people caught on and wanted to participate."

The activities can be as simple as smiling at someone, paying for the person next to you in line, or helping out.

"Just be a little friendlier or hold the door open, it doesn't have to be expensive, it doesn't have to be a grand gesture," Capuano said. "Just take a minute and ask how someone's day is going. Some of the best acts of kindness ended up being the conversations afterwards."

Some acts that Capuano has done include giving free haircuts, making care packages for the less fortunate, leaving affirmations around her local gym, and volunteering at shelter for women and children.

Her mission is to help people and to try to continue her brother's kindhearted legacy and share his strong faith with

the rest of the world.

"If you follow along with the blog you'll find that my brother was really remarkable and he made people feel really special but not for any other reason than for god's glory and to purely love other people," Capuano said.

Capuano's niece, senior McKenzie Nelson also participates in the 31 days of kindness.

"I like to pay for things for people without them knowing," Nelson said.

Nelson spreads the word about 31 days of kindness by sharing her aunt's blog with her classes and friends.

"I try to [do an act every day], I feel like that's how I can honor my uncle," Nelson said.

Capuano's sister, Kristin Nelson encourages her family to recognize her brother through selfless acts during, but not limited to, October.

"I think it's important to think about other people first, put someone else's needs before my own," Kristin said. "I'd like to say this is always easy and natural for me, but the truth is, it isn't. I need to be very intentional in things I do and say and how

I choose to respond in any given situation. Making a choice to serve others first is a beautiful thing, and it's a choice I want to make each day. And if other people pay it forward, so to speak, then that kindness will be contagious."

Starting this year, Capuano has used the hashtag #AdamsActs on Twitter to encourage others to partake in the 31 days of kindness. She's taking the opportunity to share her experiences and transform her grief into helping and loving others.

Big or small, acts of kindness are always appreciated.

"The big takeaway is that it doesn't matter if you live for 17 years like my brother did or if you have one day left on this earth, you truly can make a difference," Capuano said. "It can be a small difference or it can be a big difference, it's just how much you're willing to put into it. Even small differences matter."