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People

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People

Sometimes I'm just amazed by people. In this day and age, technology and the busyness of our lifestyle often comes in the way of what we think of people, and I know that I personally get rather caught up in it. But every now and then I get a little jolted out of that mindset, and for that I'm very grateful.

I know that I often forget just how much impact one small word or gesture can have. A while back when we Linfield students went windsurfing on a school trip, one of the ladies from Kanto Gakuin's international center brought her daughter as well. I had a lot of fun, but I wasn't thinking that anything particularly special happened until the next week came. After class that same woman was looking at pictures from the trip, and she invited me to look at them with her. At one photo she stopped and pointed out her daughter, who had actually mentioned me to her mother. I don't really remember it, but apparently when our respective boards passed (we were both on paddle boards at that time actually) I smiled at her and maybe wished her good luck, and she was really touched by it. It's amazing to think that such a little thing, that I don't really remember, meant so much to her that her mother made a point of telling me so. At the same time I'm awestruck by how so little goes such a long way and almost scared to think that I could have done some small negative thing that had just as big of an impact.

Recently I had another experience like this (positive as well, thank God!) when I was heading out to Kyoto. This week was (and still sort of is?) our "fall break" (for us four Linfield students only), so another student and I decided to go to Kyoto for four days. Before boarding the Shinkansen, I had bought a box of pocky for the trip, and when I ate some on the train, I offered some to the woman sitting next to me. She was really surprised by the offer, but gladly took some and we had a short conversation before settling into silence for the rest of the trip. She actually ended up getting off a few stops before me, but as she was leaving she took a small pack of chocolate out of her bag and placed it on my tray table, smiled at me, and said "sayonara" before walking away.

I was extremely surprised, and delighted. I know that gift giving (and returning the favor) is important in Japanese culture, but somehow this felt special. I bet that was the last thing she was expecting, but I maybe, just maybe, was able to make her day, or at least make her day a little happier. And she did the same for me; I wasn't expecting anything in return save for maybe the opportunity to talk to her, but I received a whole package of chocolate that maybe she had bought for someone else. The fact that she thought enough of me to give me that really made my day, and made me think more about how one small act of kindness really does touch people, because I know it touched me.

-Michaela