

# The Daily Pilot – Sending Out Ripples of Change

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Group of kids hopes to spread inspiration to other youngsters to address issues they see.

By Joseph Serna

When Shira Strongin, part of the Ripple Kids organization, decided she wanted to do something in her community, the 9-year-old Newport Beach girl talked with her friend, Lily Williams, 9, also from Newport Beach. The pair e-mailed their friends looking for volunteers, who in turn e-mailed more friends, and so on. Soon, the Ripple Kids had waves of compassion going well beyond the two girls.

"We feel that it's very important to help people in our community because we know that it'll change the world because we see a lot of problems every day," Shira said. "We like to help others because it makes them smile, which makes us happy inside, also."

The kids' have a goal: to cause a "ripple" effect in each others' lives.

When one child helps the community, perhaps another will too. Then someone else will copy that, then another and another and so on. They call themselves "Ripple Kids," and they're part of a developing grass-roots organization aimed at promoting community outreach in the youngest generation.

Thursday, those ripples of paying it forward spread to the Mesa Verde Convalescent Hospital in Costa Mesa.

For more than an hour kids from around the county, most from Newport-Mesa, visited with seniors, part of their personal mission to make a difference in the lives of others.

"We believe that if we can inspire kids, and empower them to take action by sharing what other kids are doing, so others see it and say, 'That's really cool. I want to do something like that,' then they'll go out and do it," said Ripple Kids founder, Bridget Belden. "A ripple kid is a kid who's identified an issue and taken action to resolve it. It doesn't matter how big."

While there were only nine kids on hand for Thursday's event, it's no minor drop in the bucket for the kids or the people they were visiting.

"It makes people living here feel better, and it enriches their lives too," said Marshall Kosberg, a resident at the convalescent home. "It's good for the seniors so they know someone cares about them."

After a brainstorming session with Belden, the kids had a plan: Make blankets for the elderly.

Soon enough a growing circle of kids had woven 40 blankets ready to be distributed Thursday.

"I think it's very admirable," said Webster Jones, a former Newport Harbor High School math teacher living at the home.

"I think it's great children of this age are getting involved. It's excellent they're getting this aspect of life now. It gives them a lot to think about when they get older," said Virginia Rader, there with her husband Keith, 81.

"Instead of me, me, me, they're thinking about how to help others."

To get involved in Ripple Kids, visit [www.ripplekids.com](http://www.ripplekids.com) or call (714) 602-2295.

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