

# Local kids cooking up kindness

The Dalai Lama once said “If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.” Local charity Good in the Hood is teaching kids to do just that. Crissy Tomarelli tells us how.

Compassion is best learned through experience — something my daughter discovered first-hand with the Good in the Hood Schools Program. Recently, students from Balmain Public School spent a day volunteering at Together2 alongside Good in the Hood.

Full disclosure: I’m not only a BPS parent but also a Good in the Hood volunteer. So, when my daughter’s class visited the centre, I jumped at the chance to help. I knew the kids (and we volunteers) would be busy cooking, baking and tending the community garden. What I didn’t expect were the lasting impressions the children would take home.



Marco delivering home cooked meals



Louis baking sweet treats

The students first heard founder Marco De Angelis speak about the purpose behind Good in the Hood. With support from local restaurants, cafés, volunteer home cooks, and drivers, and in partnership with Together2, the organisation delivers more than 400 meals and fresh produce each week to locals in need.

The children learned that many vulnerable members of the community have become disconnected and isolated. Providing food isn’t just about filling plates — it’s about fostering a sense of belonging and connection. A simple act of kindness like a warm meal or a handwritten card, can brighten someone’s day. And when those acts continue, they have the power to help someone change their life.

Kids seem to have an innate sense of compassion. Once they understood the purpose of the day, they threw themselves into every task with enthusiasm. Across two classes, the students cooked more than 40 meals, prepared 48 sweet treats, and wrote dozens of heartfelt cards.

Madeline aged 9 said, “I felt happy because I knew I would make someone’s day. I also liked plating the food into packages.” Auden aged 8 loved helping people in need and playing with the resident chickens.

That evening, the school WhatsApp chat lit up with parents sharing how their children couldn’t stop talking about the experience, a welcome change from the usual one-word answers when asked “How was your day?”

As I collapsed on the couch, I kept thinking about a question Marco had asked the kids: “Why would volunteers give their time if they don’t get paid?” Dozens of little hands shot up, the answer almost unanimous, “Because it makes you feel good.” I smiled. You don’t always need the Dalai Lama to explain compassion. Sometimes children say it best.

Good in the Hood is powered by local volunteers. Want to be part of it? Head to their website to learn how you can help.



Auden from Balmain Public School

GOOD IN THE HOOD  
[goodinthehood.com.au](http://goodinthehood.com.au)  
[hello@goodinthehood.com.au](mailto:hello@goodinthehood.com.au)



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