



The CommUUnicator

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People Love to be Noticed

By Jim Clark

Have you ever experienced the good feeling that can come from a stranger wishing you a simple "good morning?" Researchers are finding that even the most casual contacts with strangers and acquaintances can be tremendously beneficial to mental health. For some people, those so-called weak ties can be just as important as relationships with friends and family.

Psychologist Gillian Sandstrom of Great Britain's University of Sussex told National Public Radio (NPR) about the hot-dog lady she passed on her daily walks as an older student at a university. "I never bought a hot dog, but every time I walked past, I would smile and wave at her and she'd smile and wave at me." The brief encounter made her feel happier and less isolated, and worse when she wasn't there at the hotdog stand.

Inspired to conduct research on social connections, Sandstrom and other researchers are learning the benefits of the most casual contacts with strangers.

NPR listeners commented with enthusiasm. One listener recalled buying a lunch for an elderly lady struggling to ensure she stayed within her fixed budget, providing "priceless joy" to them both.

Bullied and depressed as a teenager, another listener's high point of the day was a simple "good morning" from a stranger on the way to school and is "why I go out of my way

to say good morning or pay a compliment to random strangers I meet."

And from another, "I am 85 and still able to walk my senior dog. I often meet new neighbors, usually also dog owners. Dogs are the easiest intro even if it's just the names of the dogs. I enjoy the walk more with just a brief greeting."

"People love to be noticed," says head psychiatrist Dr. Robert Waldinger at Massachusetts General Hospital. "And most of the time, they will respond positively." "If they don't," he adds, "don't give up. This is like a baseball game where you don't expect to hit the ball every time."

This article is reprinted from The Summiteer, the newsletter for Summit Square in Waynesboro, of which Jim Clark is the editor.



Red Wagon Sunday is just one of the ways UUFW responds to food insecurity in the community.

Average Sunday Service Attendance in February	
Adults 70	Children 8