

Second grade teacher Kim Reddan stands with her book outside her classroom in St. Benedict School, Holmdel. Courtesy photo



101 Angels

Holmdel teacher pens book of life-changing encounters

BY EMMALEE ITALIA ■
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Although Kim Reddan has no idea what inspired her almost a decade ago to begin recognizing the abundance of friendly influences in her life, she is certain her self-imposed assignment made her see the world differently.

An educator in the Diocese of Trenton for 28 years, the last seven as second-grade teacher in St. Benedict School, Holmdel, Reddan was inspired in 2014 to begin posting each day on her Facebook page about a different person— someone who helped or encouraged her. And she continued that activity for more than 100 days.

"I decided to pick a person who had made a difference in my life," she explained, "someone I met for five minutes, or someone I've known for years ... I even included a few pets in there."

As the project continued, Reddan was encouraged by those who enjoyed her writing to turn her post series into a book. In December 2022 she self-published the compilation "101 Angels."

The simply covered book with an illustration of angel's wings "looks like a yearbook," Reddan joked, because she

wanted to keep production costs low. But the contents inside turn the ordinary into the extraordinary.

"It really does make you realize [that] you don't know the impact you are having on others — it really made

▶ "You found more than 100 people — and you could have found more."

me think," Reddan said of the collection of encounters. "This person I interact with could really remember [my actions]."

The stories include several teachers who were kind and supportive of her as a shy and quiet schoolgirl, and who ultimately inspired her to become a teacher.

"If I didn't have some of them, school would have been a lot rougher," she said. "Another angel was a little boy in my class who lived down the street from me. I was afraid to talk to most of the other students, but I could talk to him, and I would ask him to get things for me."

One woman she met briefly as a teenager, "and she told me I was beautiful ... That really stuck with me." And of special importance was her grandfather, who earned the final spot of honor in the book.

Reddan emphasized that "there are so many people in our lives — we are so busy and don't always stop to think about those who got us through the hard times." She remembered in particular those who assisted with recovery following the death of her father, and Hurricane Sandy the day afterwards in 2012, "people who cleaned up the park, and a neighbor who gave me bread and a landline phone."

With other ideas in mind and in production, including a children's book awaiting illustration, Reddan is also considering a sequel about those whom she never met in person who inspired her.

"I hope that people think about the blessings in their lives," Reddan said of her writing's impact. "If I'm having a bad day, I'll think back to the book and remind myself, 'you found more than 100 people — and you could have had more.'"

▶ "101 Angels" is available for \$25 plus postage via email: berleybooks@yahoo.com.