Make a Difference:
For a Healthier You and Others

There are endless ways we can make a difference in our daily lives. How we choose to relate to neighbors, friends, loved ones and even strangers each day leaves its mark. Some people, through their choice of careers, spend their time directly or indirectly shaping the world we live in. Others contribute enormously through unpaid volunteer work. Every action, big or small, paid or unpaid, taken individually or as part of a group, has an impact.

On a societal level, one of the most significant ways you can make your mark is to believe in the possibility of a better world. This means actively resisting complacency, cynicism and even hopelessness. If you believe it is never too late, for example, to create peace, stop hate and violence, or end hunger, you will be more likely to take action. People around you may also be inspired to follow suit.

Each individual has the potential to work for something greater than him or herself. Acts of faith, conviction and responsibility can open up unforeseen possibilities, creating a better world community for those yet to come. To paraphrase Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Thoughts on "Making Your Mark":
A list of ideas and quotes from contributors on and off campus

John Gardner once said, "Some people strengthen society just by being the people they are." I don't know who John Gardner is, but I really like that quote...it cuts through the apathy and reinforces the power of "one."

I am an ocean lifeguard. I come in contact with tens of thousands of people at the beach, and change their lives by teaching them about the ocean, patching up their wounds, finding their missing parents or children, pulling them out of life threatening situations, performing CPR, or just quietly watching over them, making sure they all live and go home. My legacy will be the people who are alive because I did my job well.

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I will recycle, utilize public transportation and ride my bike to work so as to make a personal investment in protecting our environment.

I hope to use the education I am gaining right now to help future generations.

I surround my daughter with justice-seeking, sincere, warm and giving teachers. These role models will help her become a living example of goodness in this twenty-first century.

Some people believe you must be famous or wealthy to be influential or memorable. The people who inspire me the most are the ones who follow their passions in life and strive to help others. I hope to be an inspiration to others by working for social change.

Through our jobs, political activities, publications, etc., we make our mark in big ways. But there are also small things we do that have a tremendous ripple effect in the world. Visiting a dying friend, mentoring a child, serving meals at a homeless shelter, teaching your children through your good example, all help to strengthen the bonds between human beings and make a deep, though invisible mark.

By doing work that I believe leaves the world a better place...by working for social change and social justice.

When I was in college, I assumed I would make a mark on the world in some big picture way, but every year I feel more and more convinced that any mark I leave will be much more personal/individual. I think that being a happy, loving, generous person who cares about other people is the sort of mark that I want to make, perhaps touching the lives of the people I care most about. After that, I believe in my teaching as a way of contributing to the world; believing in teaching as activism is what enables me to do it at all (i.e., makes it seem so much less ivory tower).

I plan to leave my mark as a person who loved to help others without the expectation of rewards.

I will continue to teach people around me to look at issues with more passion, more depth, and more personal activism, rather than supporting them in being passive members of society.

I want to touch those people who I come in contact with every day. When I went to my father's memorial service, there were hundreds of
people who came together to remember him. I knew then he was the richest man in the world—he had been here, he had touched others.

I'll make my mark by: treading the earth as gently as I am able; treating others as I'd like to be treated—kindly and with respect; being myself as much as I can, rather than trying to fit into anyone else's idea of what or who I should be, and by doing so, set an example for others; helping others in need as much as I can, any way I can; being a good friend; spreading good cheer whenever I can.

I've always said that I want to matter to those who matter to me. I don't want to be famous, but I want to make a difference in the lives around me.

I make my mark every few months by giving blood. I feel I've saved some lives this way.

A Place to Start: Cal Corps offers an excellent entry-point for "good-deed doing." The web site offers a menu of volunteering opportunities that includes a number of student-directed public service activities.