

# Let's start caring about people again

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BY JOLINE GUTIERREZ KRUEGER / JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

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Life coaches Julie Shields, left, and Mia Logan have created “Thank Forward,” a kit to inspire acts of kindness. Logan earned her master’s degree and Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico. (Courtesy of Mia Logan)

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Greetings from the eve before what comes next.

Which is to say that I am writing this hours before our contentious, consequential, crazy Election Day has dawned.

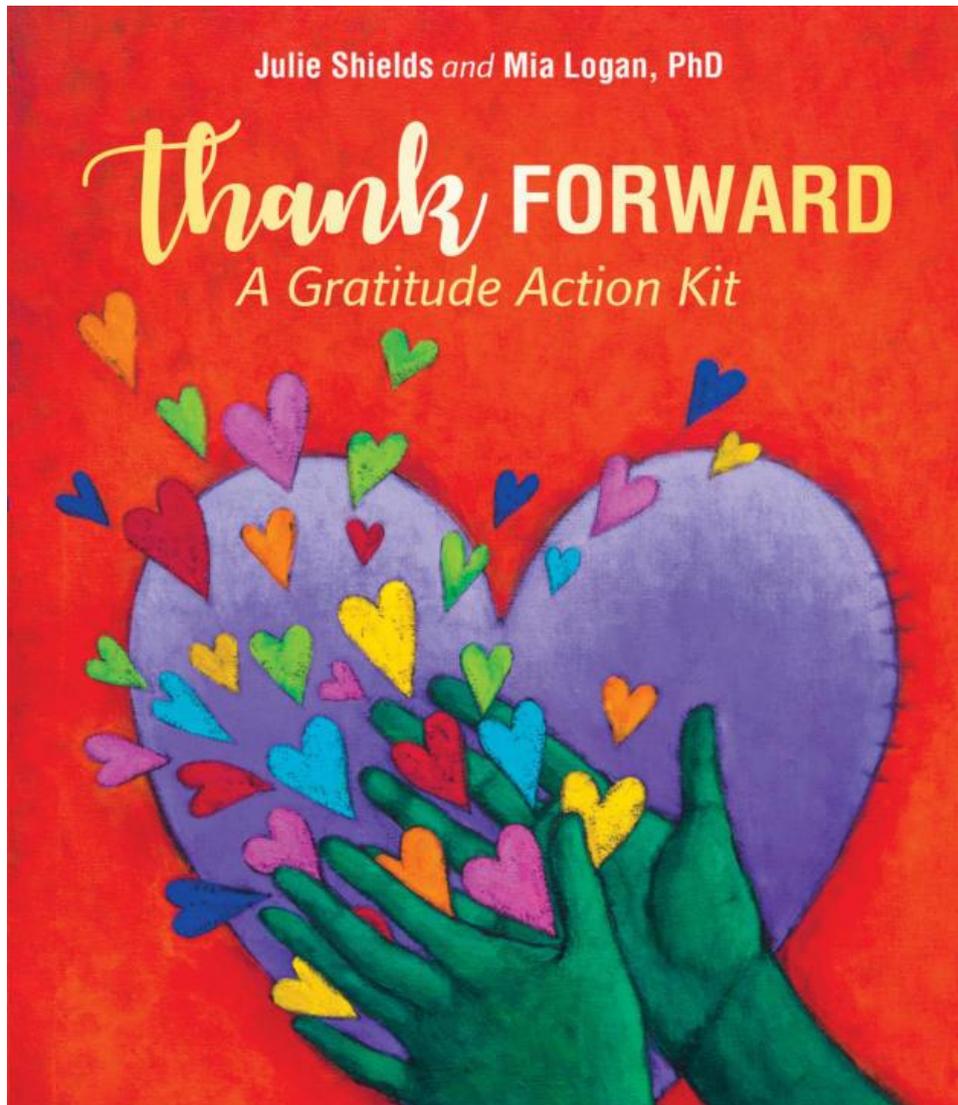
But for the purposes of this column, the outcome of this high-stakes, high-anxiety vote is beside the point. Because let’s face it, no matter whether your guy won or lost, it’s unlikely that what comes next is a few rounds of “Kumbaya” and warm handshakes.

What a long, strange, ugly trip it’s been. Our nails are bitten to the quick. We’re having nightmares, can’t sleep. Tempers are short. Stress is high. Middle fingers are aching. We are bitter. We are tired.

This rift is real and unlikely to be mended easily, no matter who won. For some of us, the civil war is real. For many more, the ties cut in the last four years are permanently severed.

Somehow, though, we need to find a little gratitude in the wreckage, a little kindness in the storm.

Mia Logan thinks she can help.



Samples of the 21 themed cards included in the “Thank Forward: A Gratitude Action Kit.” The illustrations on creating and spreading kindness are by Tammy Totoro-Dick of Albuquerque. (Courtesy of Mia Logan)

The Albuquerque life coach and entrepreneur and fellow coach Julie Shields of Denver saw a need to help others give back by paying it forward back in the early days of the current presidential administration when anxiety and anger began to rise.

“We believe what goes around, comes around. Love begets love. Gratitude begets gratitude,” Logan said. “From all the research, gratitude is where it is at. We wanted to give something to the world to inspire people to pay it forward. When you give to others, it makes others want to give.”

Their shared interest led them to create “Thank Forward: A Gratitude Action Kit,” which consists of 21 themed cards on creating and spreading kindness and a companion guide with suggestions and affirmations.

“It is much more than a book,” Logan said. “It is a call to action, a movement. It is to inspire people to go out and do something to help others.”

The cards, illustrated beautifully by Albuquerque artist Tammy Totoro-Dick, have themes such as “Disconnect to Reconnect” and “Applaud Service” and suggest ways to spread kindness by smiling more, bringing a meal to a neighbor, returning a shopping cart to the storefront, planting a seed, listing 100 things you are grateful for.

Simple things, really. But these days it seems simple is not always so simple.

“These cards are made for sharing, encouraging human connection and spreading positivity,” literature about the kit reads. “The secret to happiness is gratitude, and Thank Forward is your guide.”

Readers are also encouraged to share their stories and experiences on the “Thank Forward” website and social media as well as share each card for others to find.

“Our hope is that by sharing those experiences and sharing the cards, such as leaving them in a mail box or along a hiking trail, it will keep the movement going.”

The movement, as Logan envisions it, has been slower going than anticipated. The “Thank Forward” kit was released this February, weeks before the COVID-19 shutdown.

“It’s been challenging,” Logan said. “We haven’t been able to do book-signings and workshops, but we have done podcasts, social media and some give-aways.”

Kindness, though, always finds a way – at least it found its way to me. After listening to loops of “Les Miserables” and brain bleaching on Food Network and episodes of “The West Wing” in those final jaw-clenching days and sleepless nights before Nov. 3, perusing and performing some gratitude action seems a far better idea.

Not that wallowing in the darker side of things is unusual or unexpected. Logan, who has a Ph.D. in organizational learning from the University of New Mexico, explained that our brains are hard-wired to be driven by negative thought. That, it seems, has certainly been true for many of us these past four years.

“It’s because of our fear of being attacked and trying to survive that we naturally glom onto the negative,” she said. “Looking toward the positive requires retraining our brains.”

Gratitude, she continued, is a positive emotion that serves a greater purpose. It is more than being thankful for something that has occurred in the past but is actively about the future.

“Gratitude is a deeper appreciation for something or someone that produces long lasting positivity and ultimately, self-control and self-management,” she said. “It

pushes people to work in the moment to benefit what is to come. It supports people in connecting to something larger than themselves.”

Logan knows something about gratitude and negative thought on a personal level. Her consulting business tanked when the economy did in 2008, which led to her struggling to make ends meet, depression and poor health. Diagnosed with leaky gut and chronic and adrenal fatigue, she had to completely change her lifestyle and diet and find the right career path. She had to retrain her brain and incorporate gratitude into her life.

“I had to learn to be kind to myself,” she said.

That, she said, is part of spreading kindness to others. It is healing, not just of ourselves but of others.

“We have to start caring about people again,” she said.

That, I hope, is what comes next, begrudgingly, slowly, perhaps. But surely.

*UpFront is a front-page news and opinion column. Reach Joline at 730-2793, [jkrueger@abqjournal.com](mailto:jkrueger@abqjournal.com), Facebook or [@jolinekg](https://twitter.com/jolinekg) on Twitter.*

## **More gratitude**

“Thank Forward: A Gratitude Action Kit” by Julie Shields and Mia Logan is available through Amazon and other online bookstores.

Follow the movement at [ThankForward.com](http://ThankForward.com), on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.