

Stop, Look, & Listen

Autumn is my favorite season. The cooler weather means buying new school supplies (Ah!! The smell of a well sharpened #2 pencil), Friday Night Football (Go East!), making a pot of chili in the slow-cooker(Yum-mo!!), and the return of Starbuck's PSL. But nothing says the fall to me more than the return of school zones. Yep, those dang school zones!! No way around it I go through at least 6 school zones on my way to work, adding a good 15 minutes to my otherwise 15 minute commute. But worse than the annoyance of having to slow down and turn off my cell phone is the weird heart that I have for school crossing guards.

I'm not sure why, but whenever I see a school crossing-guard, I get all teary eyed. I'm getting misty even while I write this. There's just something about the selflessness and namelessness of the person who volunteers to stand out there and get our kids safely across the street. I, of course, have my least favorites, like the Murphy Police...whistling and pointing and confusing the heck out of me. Does he mean go straight or wait? Who came up with this traffic pattern? And then I see him with his yellow slicker and shower cap to protect his Jake Justice police hat from the pourin' down rain and I curse myself for every curse word I ever silently screamed at him. I want to just roll down the window and give him my pumpkin spice latte. He's there for my kid.

Then, there is my favorite, a friend of mine. She is not so very tall, but I love the gusto with which she raises her stop sign so everyone can see her and the kids, almost all of whom are taller than she is. STOP RIGHT THERE, WE'RE COMING THROUGH! Her crossing isn't even directly on my route. But sometimes, I make a detour when I want a little encouragement to start my day.

And the retired folks, yank at my heart strings too (even if they do take the longest and are the most persnickety)! I love the dude at Park and Los Robles with his wiry orange bicycle flag. I wouldn't want to get in his way with that thing, it could hurt somebody. I always wish they had someone like him at Park & Jupiter where the middle school kids seem to be playing chicken running back and forth from the school to the 7-11 on the corner; probably getting into worse trouble behind the dumpster than the peril of dodging the traffic. I say a prayer at that corner every morning.

I always make it a point to make eye contact and wave at these special people. With the exception of my one friend, I don't even know their names. The school crossing guard has two functions: 1) get the kids safely across the road so they can get on with their day 2) Tell the rest of us to slow down... we have all day to get where we need to be goin'. I think I have been blessed by a lot of spiritual crossing guards in my life. Think of who has helped you get safely across life's obstacles, and who has waved their orange flag at you to slow down. The next time you see a crossing guard, smile, wave, & thank God for all those people who give to you selflessly each day. Be sure to have that Starbuck's napkin in hand, you might find yourself, like me, gettin' a little teary eyed. Have a happy, blessed fall!