

# The New York Times

ON THE WEB

## Sharing the Love With a Hard-Sell Crowd

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Among the peddlers of chandelier earrings, watercolors and conspiracy theories, it wasn't easy for Taz Tagore to convince people in Union Square that what she offered was free. "I want to appreciate you for who you are," Ms. Tagore said with rosy earnestness to a bleary-eyed woman slurping coffee on a park bench. Ms. Tagore then handed her a little red button that said, "Appreciate." The woman looked utterly baffled.

Along with a team of four volunteer appreciators, Ms. Tagore, a freelance graphic designer, was wending her way around the square, offering sunny acknowledgments as part of a new campaign called Appreciate: New York.

New Yorkers, as Ms. Tagore sees it, are chronically underappreciated. She recalled an instance when she appreciated a street sweeper in Times Square. His eyes welled up with tears; he said he hadn't been appreciated in 17 years.

Not everyone is so grateful. Adam Bucko, a dreadlocked fellow appreciator, bounded up to a grizzled hot dog vendor at 15th Street and Union Square West and said cheerily, "We just want to thank you for your hard work." Furrowing his brows, the vendor stared back quizzically.

Ms. Tagore then approached a couple of indifferent Bangladeshi newsstand operators. "You provide us with snacks; you do such a good job," she said as she handed over a button. "What is this?" one of the men snapped. "I can't read English, my friend. Next, please!"

The volunteer appreciators, whose campaign began this month, continued spreading their message around Union Square. A man idling in a delivery truck looked up from his Chinese newspaper and beamed. A group of office workers smoking outside their building looked puzzled. A security guard in a fluorescent safety vest flashed a gap-toothed smile. A bearded man gave 32-year-old Ms. Tagore a lascivious look.

Some people reflected on their own sources of appreciation. Jaime Davidovich, an Argentine artist dressed all in black, stated gruffly that he would "appreciate to get rid of the whole Bush regime." Selma Rogoff, a white-haired woman who was pushing her shopping cart through the Greenmarket, said, "The world is too negative and worrisome," adding that she particularly appreciated buying apples at the market to make applesauce, but she did not appreciate paying \$1 a pound that day, as opposed to the usual 70 cents.

The appreciators finished up their rounds with a quick run into the subway station to appreciate the token booth clerks. Ms. Tagore, the executive director of the Reciprocity Foundation, a nonprofit organization that serves homeless youth, said her group planned to continue Appreciate: New York by setting up an appreciation station in Columbus Circle in December and by distributing "appreciation kits" - buttons, stickers and instructions - next spring so people can form their own

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squads of appreciators.

In any case, she seems to have discovered a niche.

"I'm appreciated every day - I have two little girls," said Nicole Bishop, who was selling fingerling potatoes and arugula at the Greenmarket. "But this is nice."