



THE
JUBILEE CENTRE
FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



Exploring Gratitude and Service Among Communities

Lee Rogerson MBE

INTRODUCTION

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is a pioneering interdisciplinary research centre at the University of Birmingham focusing on character, virtues and values in the interest of human flourishing. As a part of this work, Give Thanks-Give Back is a development project exploring the theme of 'gratitude' as a motivating factor in acts of service.

Engaging with children from primary and secondary schools in Birmingham and Coventry, it asks what things people are thankful for and crucially, how this translates into civic engagement through 'giving back'.

In the following pages, you will see a flavour of how schools, local businesses,

charities, a politician, and even a busy airport, express a sense of gratitude in acts of service.

What is interesting is that this is not sporadic or tokenistic. It is deliberate and considered, expressed in ways appropriate to their own sphere of work and sense of place in the local community. At the same time, it is not merely individualistic, for it is also possible to see an interconnection, almost web like, between groups and organisations that, although very different, share a common desire to benefit others locally, and thus form ad hoc relationships and connections, to this end.

It has been fascinating and humbling to step back and see how these have

come about - not according to the co-ordinated master plan of a few - but through individuals and organisations discovering a shared appreciation of the community around them, forming goals and working towards them.

It simply remains for me to add my personal thanks for the way in which all those I met in the course of this project (those found in these pages and those who are not) have been so willing to allow me to observe and participate in their work and community. Thank you!

Lee Rogerson MBE

A documentary film has been made to complement this publication, featuring many of the individuals and organisations seen within its pages.

The International School

The Give Thanks - Give Back project has focused on working with year 8 and year 9 pupils. A total of 80 students have engaged with the project and 45 have completed questionnaires and informal interviews.

Shirestone Academy

A class of 30 year 3 pupils have engaged with the project as part of the PSHE curriculum. Some of the pupils have gone on to take part in the Young People's Forum - addressing issues of local community concern under the umbrella of the Pilot Partnership that works with a number of local schools in the area.

Blue Coat School

A group of 15 students in year 12 at the school have participated in the project. Four of those have gone on to make short films about what they are grateful for and ways in which they want to give back, as a result.



// I think it's fantastic that young people take such an interest



Andrea, Rhoda, Mitchell and David, students from The International School, made a positive impact in their community by winning a grant of £3,000 for a local charity that supports children and families by tackling the problem of domestic violence and abuse.

The award was granted by the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) which operates in 78 schools across England and has given over £800,000 to good causes since 2006.

 **£3000**
GRANT WON FOR
STEPPING STONES
TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & ABUSE

To participate, students must form a team, research and contact a local

YOUTH AND PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

charity of interest, and prepare a presentation about why they feel the charity deserves the award. The presentation is given, in competition with other presenting teams, before a panel of expert judges.

Isabelle, a senior worker at the charity, gave a filmed interview discussing how thrilled she was at the response of the

young people and the fact that they had done so well in securing £3,000 of funding.

She said: 'I think it's fantastic that young people take such an interest in Stepping Stones. Our whole ethos is about empowering people to live their lives to the full.'


ISABELLE EASTON
STEPPING STONES



YOUTH AND PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

Last year, Lauren was part of a successful team that secured £3,000 for a local charity; The Life Education Centre, involved in educating local primary school pupils about the dangers of taking drugs.



 **£3000**
GRANT WON FOR
THE LIFE EDUCATION CENTRE
EDUCATING PUPILS ABOUT
THE DANGERS OF DRUGS

The award of £3,000 meant the charity was able to expand its work into secondary schools.

In researching the project for the presentation, she was so impressed

that she has subsequently continued to volunteer at the project.

Lauren says: *'It is not enough just to win [some money] and then forget about it. You want help them further because it is such a big issue in society that is so important.'*



// They see these issues and they say what can be done? How can I fix it? What can I do?

KATHRYN CROFTS
 THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



Kathryn is head of French and Spanish at the school. She was instrumental in helping establish the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) project in the school.

The programme runs for 12 weeks and has a 'light touch' approach from the teachers. The young people have to take the initiative in researching and contacting their chosen charity.

Kathryn says: *'Every child in the year group chose a charity... chose an issue that was important to them... made a*

presentation... for everybody involved, children, charities and teachers - it has been incredible. The response has been amazing.'

Grateful for the education and upbringing she received, Kathryn came to the school through the national charity **Teach First** which seeks to train and support new teachers to work in primary and secondary schools in low income communities across the UK.



I will always be grateful for those teachers who had an amazing impact on my life

Mark is very committed to the principle of 'giving back' to the community and society in general.

Having come from a very difficult childhood, which saw him excluded from schools at an early age for bad behaviour, he found himself drawn into the gang culture scene. He became the leader of a local gang and was well known to the police. He says that the best way to describe his early educational experience was *'that he survived it.'*

To his surprise, and to that of his family and everyone else, he passed the Eleven plus exam and attended a grammar school. His family, being very poor, and his dad suffering poor mental health, Mark was very reliant on the support and encouragement of teachers and parents of friends. He excelled at sport, becoming captain of the school rugby team and playing at county level. This proved a significant turning point and he says: *'I will always be grateful for those teachers who had an amazing impact on my life.'*

Mark, through the influence of a family from New Zealand, who were very interested in North American Indian history, came into contact, at the age of 15, with the North American Ten Commandments. He says: *'One of their commandments is to give back. It is about sharing and giving the good*



MARK GARSIDE
HEAD TEACHER, THE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

you have achieved in life back to the community and wider community.'

It inspired him to achieve academically, to go to university and into teaching. One of the first jobs he had when he came to Birmingham was working in

GIVING BACK THROUGH TEACHING

a pupil exclusion unit. He says: *'From an early stage in my career I made the choice to give back through teaching.'* He quickly rose to become the head of that centre. He believes that his own

Moving into teaching in a school, and even though working full-time, he still had the energy to set up one of the first sports and leisure centres in Birmingham and England - Kings Norton Sports and Leisure Centre - through opening up the school on evenings and weekends. He also volunteered in the evenings to work at Hewell Grange Prison (a youth detention centre).

He was asked to come to The International School *'when the school was not in a very good place.'* Within two weeks he found himself as the acting deputy head of the school. He says: *'Peers and colleagues within the profession at the time said 'what are you doing, Mark? It's a very difficult, tough place. You need to think of your career.' What I thought about was the reverse of that: that sounds like the place I want to be.'*

Despite the difficulties and problems, he is turning the school around and 'giving back' in the process.

experiences enabled him to help 15 and 16 year olds who felt trapped in an education system that *'wasn't working for them,'* to make better choices and take very different paths in life than they otherwise would have.



// If you have a shred of talent, if you have got a shred of anything that you can give back, then you are duty bound to do it

Liam has been an elected member of parliament since July 2004, representing the Hodge Hill constituency. He has served in government in the Cabinet in a variety of key posts from immigration to the Treasury. He is currently Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Liam cites his parents as the biggest influence in shaping his thinking as a child: *'They brought me up with a sense that if you have a shred of talent, if you have got a shred of anything that you can give back, then you are duty bound to do it.'*

His mum tragically died of cancer aged 52 and this had a profound impact on Liam: *'It taught me that you can't put off the things that you think that you are here to do. You've actually got to get on and do them.'*

Liam has been very proactive in the community as an MP. He set up the Funder's Fair - bringing together local

people with ideas of how to better change the community and those with the financial resources to help.

He also tries to visit a local school every fortnight and welcomes frequent visits from school children to the House of Commons. He considers this so important that when in London he will alter whatever he is doing to make time to spend at least half an hour with school visitors.

This is in part due to the research, **'Of Good Character'**, published by Professor James Arthur that prefigured the launching of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. One element of that research: ***Citizen's of Character: the Values and Character Dispositions of 14-16 Year Olds in the Hodge Hill Constituency (14-16)***, has made a lasting impact.

Liam states: *'The research that Birmingham University did is probably still the most influential piece of research I have ever seen in ten years as a public*

MP FACILITATING CHANGE

RT HON LIAM BYRNE
MP FOR BIRMINGHAM HODGE HILL



servant, as an MP, and as a Minister, quite honestly. It revealed the level of aspiration and enterprise in our community. But it also showed that in our education system we have to equip our kids, not just with an understanding of the world around them, but with an understanding of what is inside them.'

He considers character education as 'mission critical' to how: *'We raise our children and raise our city [Birmingham]. There are lots of great instincts there, but sometimes they*

need to be developed and given the space to develop. And you don't do that without guidance and direction. And so developing self confidence, developing communication skills, developing that sense of self-worth that an understanding of things like gratitude can really help with, that is really important. And, frankly, it is as important for many people as what they learn in text books and what they study for in exams.'



It's our responsibility to give back as recognition that we impact the community

Andy acts as a link between the airport company and the local community and enables some of the positive benefits that the airport can bring to that.

The flagship scheme that the airport company operates is the Community Trust Fund. This makes grants of up to £3,000 available to small community groups and organisations that are most affected by the airport's operations.

Andy works closely with those community groups to try and make the greatest impact and most effective difference. He is also a trustee of *The Pump* a community hub and base that is widely used by a variety of local youth and community groups and organisations. Its association with the airport predates Andy's involvement and he is very keen to be involved as it is such a

 **£3000**
GRANTS AVAILABLE
TO SMALL ORGANISATIONS
MOST AFFECTED
BY THE AIRPORT OPERATIONS



ANDY HOLDING
COMMUNITY AFFAIRS MANAGER
BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT

vibrant resource centre.

A significant part of his work has been with local schools. In particular, he has had a lot of involvement with Shirestone Academy and The International School.

He says: *'We work quite closely with The International School as it is impacted quite heavily by the flight*

BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT & COMMUNITY

The airport takes its responsibility seriously in trying to help communities, but is modest with respect to how this is received:

'In terms of gratitude from the community, we wouldn't expect a huge amount of gratitude from the community. We see it as a responsibility; an important responsibility, because we do impact on people's lives.

Admittedly, there are positive benefits. We provide employment. We provide access to markets for business and all the other things that we are familiar with. But, the bottom line, if you're living close to an airport, you are impacted by it. It is our responsibility to give something back to that community. Not as a solution - it doesn't stop the noise - but as a way of recognising that we do impact them, and that it is the responsible thing to be doing, to give something back.'

path of aircraft to the north of the airfield. Supporting education is one of the most important ways in which we can influence the development of the local community. You are helping young people gain the skills to face the challenges they are going to face in the world of work.'

In practical terms, this has involved the airport funding, through the local council, a scheme of sound insulation using double glazing on critical parts of school buildings that are most severely affected by aircraft noise.

THE PUMP PARTNERSHIP



LOUISE EDWARDS
DIRECTOR OF THE PILOT
PARTNERSHIP BASED AT THE PUMP

The Pilot Partnership is a Community Interest Company (CIC) set in the heart of Shard End and close to The International School and Shirestone Academy. It was set up three years ago from its previous work as an Education Action Zone.

It predominantly focuses on working with local primary school children, although it also works with one all age secondary school.

The organisation focuses on character building and developing aspiration, as well as work on numeracy and literacy.

It runs a one day overnight residential for 6 - 7 year olds around the theme of respect. It runs a three day, two night residential for 8 - 9 year olds, focusing on cultural diversity and promoting cultural harmony. The final residential is for 10 - 11 year olds and is on the theme of building aspiration.



// We focus on character building and developing aspiration as well as numeracy & literacy

It also facilitates a *Young People's Forum* that operates in a number of local primary schools. It has an attached citizenship module that is taught alongside it.

The aim of the forum is for young people to actively engage in issues that they care about. Shirestone Academy pupils are involved in the Young People's Forum.



The forum recently met with Liam Byrne MP at The Pump to present to him about the local issues that they feel passionate about.

PUPILS ON GRATITUDE & GIVING BACK

BLESSED
BLUE COAT SCHOOL



'I went to Mexico to build a house for a family in 2012. I think that was one of the most powerful experiences in my life because I went from living in a four star hotel to basically slums.

Those places are literally next to each other. You've got beautiful beaches, massive houses, Land Rovers and Lamborghinis and, then, travel three

or four miles south, and you have beat up cars, run down houses and children who can't afford to feed themselves.

It is insane that there is that big of a difference in the world. If you have the opportunity to do good to someone you are under duty to do good to them.'



// If everyone puts their bit in, it makes the world a nicer place



ALEXANDRA
BLUE COAT SCHOOL

'The main things that I am grateful for are my friends, family and people I care about. Because without them I don't think I would be able to get on in life. When I am down they give me that push up again.

There are people out there who don't have anyone. They don't have a family. They don't have friends. They are going through a hard time. They need someone. So I think there are things that I can do, anyone can do. I just really like the whole idea of helping people.'



EMILY
BLUE COAT SCHOOL

'If you haven't got support from your family then who have you got it from that means something? I would like to go to university and do a degree in psychology. That would be my dream because I want to give back.

There are a lot of people who need therapy and I would like to know in myself that I have helped them. I've always loved children, working with them and mentoring them. I would love to go into children's psychology. If everyone puts their bit in, it makes the world a nicer place.'



Each October we donate 60% of our employees' time, energy & expertise to local communities

Established in 1888, Alcoa is a global leader in lightweight metals technology, engineering and manufacturing. It employs over 60,000 people in 30 countries, delivering products made of titanium, nickel and aluminum.

Its technologies are used to improve industrial and consumer electronics, automotive and commercial transport, as well as air and space travel.

Alcoa is a major presence in the local community of Kitts Green. Its factory was originally built in 1938 by James Booth Ltd to concentrate on aluminium

production. Later it was sold on to two other aluminium production companies before being bought by Alcoa in 2000 and brought in to the Flat Rolled Products division of Alcoa Europe.

Throughout its long history the company has built an enviable reputation as a producer of high strength aluminium alloy materials. From SpitOire to Airbus, few UK aircraft have not incorporated aluminium from Kitts Green in their construction. Worldwide, Kitts Green plate is used by all major airframe builders in Europe, the Far East and the USA, including the latest Boeing designs.



Kitts Green Alcoa staff improving the community during the month of October

ALCOA INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

 **\$125,000**
GRANT ANNOUNCED
TO PROVIDE INTERSHIPS FOR
UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

What sets Alcoa apart is its commitment to voluntary service in the community. Every October



Beverley Hawkesford, Trustees Meeting at The Pump

is designated as a global 'month of service' in which 60% of employees around the world contribute their time, energy and expertise to make a positive difference in the communities where they work.

The Kitts Green factory is recognised worldwide within the company as a beacon of excellence.

It is involved in community work at The Pump - where Beverley Hawkesford serves as a trustee - and recently announced a grant of \$125,000 to provide internships for local unemployed youth.

Alcoa also gives back to The International School and its literacy programme. It has donated money and staff time to improve pupils' skills.

'I am a local lad. I grew up in the area and my primary school was Shirestone [Academy] School and then Sir Wilfred Martineau School (now The International School). I have a lot of connections still to the community through the site and also some passion for the schools that set me on the ladder, so to speak.' - **Nigel Bratt (Inside Sales Manager) Alcoa Manufacturing (GB) Ltd**



JOHN TEMPLETON
FOUNDATION

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**UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM**

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