

Serving the Community

A week ago I was invited by the leader of the 10th Hong Kong Scout Group, the St. Paul's College troop, to attend an Investiture Ceremony held in the Lower Playground. An investiture is where new members are welcomed into the scouts. On that Saturday afternoon, 28 new scouts joined the 10th Hong Kong, many from our own Cub Scout pack but also new boys to the College. I was also pleased to see other boys move up from the scouts to the venture scouts, the most senior section in our scout group. Hopefully, some of our venture scouts will one day decide to become scout leaders and so continue to serve the 10th Hong Kong and St. Paul's College for many years to come.

The most important part of the Investiture was when each of the new scouts gave the Scout Promise. With one hand on the scout flag and the other hand making the scout salute, each said:

On my honour, I promise that I will do my best, to do my duty to God and to my Country, to help other people and to keep the Scout Law.

By promising to keep the Scout Law, each boy was acknowledging that:

1. A Scout is to be trusted.
2. A Scout is loyal.
3. A Scout is friendly and considerate.
4. A Scout belongs to the world-wide family of Scouts.
5. A Scout has courage in all difficulties.
6. A Scout makes good use of his time and is careful of possessions and property.
7. A Scout has self-respect and respect for others.

Our Scout Troop has a busy programme of activities over the next twelve months and I am pleased that a number of boys will be going to the World Scout Jamboree in London next July. The jamboree is a celebration of world scouting and will involve a camp for over 45,000 scouts from all around the world. The Jamboree aims to promote *Adventure*, *International Friendship*, and the *Development of Young People* and there will be many activities for all participants. Next year's jamboree is particularly special because 2007 is the one hundredth anniversary of the Scout movement.

I congratulate the scouts on their successes and their willingness to serve the community. Of course, there are many other young people around the world who have also taken up the challenge to serve others. Many countries acknowledge the work and dedication of their citizens through various awards. In Hong Kong and Australia, for example, the governments call for nominations from the public for Outstanding Young Person of the Year. I would like to share with you the stories of two recent recipients of the Australian Outstanding Young Person of the Year. I hope that both stories will provide you with an insight as to why young men and women decide to give so much of themselves for the betterment of others.

The first story is about a remarkable young man who lives in Melbourne and whom I know personally. The following passage is based on the Australian of the Year website:

‘At just 20 years of age, Hugh Evans is dedicating his life to helping the most underprivileged people in this world. Hugh's passion for helping others began when he was 12 (Form 1 age) and became involved in World Vision's 40-Hour Famine. He started organising the 40-Hour Famine at his school and personally set himself very high targets. Over the next few years, his school became the highest fundraising school for the 40-Hour Famine in Australia. At age 14 (Form 3 age) a sponsored trip to the Philippines to see World Vision's work first-hand impacted Hugh's life immensely. Sleeping in a slum, Hugh witnessed an entire community built around a rubbish dump and saw children scavenging for food and dying around him. It was the turning point in his life.

‘This experience led him to found The Oak Tree Foundation, Australia's first entirely youth-run and youth-driven aid and development agency. Run by over 250 volunteers under the age of 25, it is a movement of young Australians who seek to empower developing communities through education. In its first year of operation, The Oak Tree Foundation raised over AUS\$100,000 to develop a Community Resource Centre in a small town in South Africa. This centre now provides more than 1,000 local people with the opportunity to receive education for the first time in their lives.

‘Hugh believes young people can do anything, given the opportunity. The Oak Tree Foundation provides an avenue for many young Australians to make a difference in this world. Young people are encouraged to use the

gifts they already have, and what they are already passionate about, to serve the poor.

‘Hugh has since become World Vision’s first Youth Ambassador. He is a passionate humanitarian, volunteer and youth leader. Hugh’s sincerity, humility and genuineness are what have inspired so many people, young and old, to work towards helping those less fortunate. He is an inspiring young man’.

The second story I would like to share with you is about Trisha Broadbridge who also lives in Melbourne. When she was at school, Trisha wanted to help her classmates when they were experiencing crises in their lives. Along with a small group of other young leaders, Trisha established the Reach Foundation that for the past six years has ‘reached out’ to teenagers experiencing problems. The aim is to improve their self-esteem. She has run workshops and camps that “give teenagers a place where they can go a little crazy, connect with others and be heard”.

However, Trisha’s life was to turn upside down on the 26th December, Boxing Day, 2004. Trisha and her new husband Troy, a well-known player with the Melbourne Football Club, were married a few days earlier and were on their honeymoon on Phi Phi Island off the west coast of Thailand. However, Trisha’s life, along with the lives of hundreds of thousands of others, was to be shattered in a matter of minutes with the arrival of the Asian tsunami. Trisha and Troy tried desperately to escape the sea as it rushed inland. Trapped on the lower floor of their hotel, Troy managed to lift Trisha to the safety of the balcony of a room above. Although he managed to save Trisha, however, Troy was swept away by the water and drowned.

It would have been very easy for Trisha to have given up her community work following the death of her husband Troy. However, this courageous young lady started a new project for the Reach Foundation and with the financial help of the Melbourne Football Club she set up an Education Centre on Thailand’s Phi Phi Island. For the past two years, this Centre has been helping the boys and girls on the Island who were so deeply affected by the tsunami. Trisha has been assisting the young people of Phi Phi to learn how to continue with their education and how to learn after such devastation. At the time that she won the Young Australian of the Year award, Trisha said "no matter what happens you have to keep going".

These stories are about two remarkable young people. Yet they are also very ordinary and humble young people. Both share a passion to improve the quality of life for others. In Hugh and Trisha's cases, their journey in community service started when they were still at school, indeed when they were in the Junior Forms. Hugh and Trisha share a common goal, that is, to make a difference to the lives of other people.

Their stories show us just what can be accomplished with passion and determination. I wonder how many of you have the same drive and motivation as Hugh and Trisha and our Scouts. I urge each of you to think about what you might do to help others.

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