

Founders' Day 2017

Putting back into the community - one of Lord's Holme principal virtues that led to the establishment of our school 23 years ago. Mutual care and respect are values he believed are essential to the form of progressive education we receive to this day.

A duty to give back... what does it mean? For some it simply means to return that book which sits on your bookshelf but which you actually borrowed from somebody else. Other than that, for me, it means to return something to the community we live in, because we are offered a lot here at the ECP and we are free to take out as much as we can. It is important to realise that the opportunities we have here are not available to everybody around the world, that we are rather fortunate people. These opportunities sometimes become so common to us that we do not even recognise their value anymore until one of them is lost.

During the communist regime many educated people were imprisoned for expressing their true thoughts, they lost everything that was important to them and only their dignity was preserved, sometimes even their dignity was attacked. These strong people then learned to appreciate seemingly simple things... A piece of paper, a pencil, a view of the garden, friendship... We therefore need to fully comprehend all the things we have in our lives and then realise how truly rich we are as personalities. This should then make us think that we need to give back some of what we receive. And you are right if you are asking why us and why now?

As students of a Czech-International school we have the opportunity to listen to interesting people sharing their ideas, attend unique events to widen our consciousness, travel to inspirational places, take part in quite rich activities throughout the year, followed by the open door to study anywhere in the world... We constantly need to keep reminding ourselves that only very few people on this planet have this kind of background to work from. And for this reason it is important to think about ways of giving back to the community. For me, there are two main routes of giving back, by mutual care and by great projects.

Creating an environment where people feel secure and valued is extremely important to a well working society and who else creates this environment other than us? So seemingly simple actions such as complimenting somebody else's work or idea is a way of striving towards a well working community. Caring about an individual's well being and to be constructively critical towards their actions or thinking is likely to benefit the person more than if they would act on their own. Even our presence sometimes makes people feel appreciated when we attend their concerts, sports matches and other performances. Positive and motivational approach towards learning can be an inspiration to others.

The other route of giving back are the projects. In our school we see a lot of initiatives to create incredible projects such as *Smile* where a photograph can allow the less fortunate to study a second language. The Václav Havel Scholarship where our students get together and raise financial support to allow other students to study here. Poetry evenings to help the charity *Zajicek na koni* while spreading literate culture or the Stratosphere project which showed anything is possible and allowed us to see the bigger picture of our World from 30 kilometers above the earth.

These projects have one thing in common... people getting together and working towards a goal that is not to their benefit only, but rather to the benefit of others as well. I believe that being slightly selfless is crucial in a well working society, as we are here at the ECP, not to compete with each other, but to pull that one rope. We should support, observe and get inspired by what other people are doing. And for this reason I think the Lord Holme Prize for Services to the Community never was and never will be only awarded just to that one person. It is awarded to all the people that stood behind and supported this one individual to bring his or her ideas to life and work towards a well working community as a team.

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